

My name is Don Smucker and I reside in Stanton, Michigan. I have worked as an Extension Educator for Michigan State university, the University of Illinois and the university of Minnesota for 35 years as a 4-H agent, Agriculture agent and County Extension Director. I retired in 2003 and worked part time for another 10 years as a county Land Use Educator. During that time, I worked with city, village township, and county planning commissions promoting the participation of Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals in training programs on Planning and Zoning emphasizing the MSU Citizen Planner program. I also was a member of my local County and City Planning commissions during this time. I do want to be clear that today I am here as a private citizen and in no way am I representing Michigan State University Extension.

Thank you to the committee and Representative Scott for the opportunity. I appreciate your attention to this issue, which has challenged communities throughout Michigan for quite some time.

If you have followed the debates over renewable energy projects in Michigan as I have, you are either very delighted or deeply concerned, depending on whether you support a clean energy transition for our state. I for one am very concerned.

These conflicts are about far more than just green energy. At stake is whether farmers and landowners have the right to harvest the wind or sun on privately held lands. To date, decisions regarding these projects have been made at the local level, primarily townships. In areas where these projects become contentious, which is most areas these days, local officials have been on the receiving end of almost every type of harassment imaginable by those who, in my opinion, simply do not want to look at any wind turbine or solar panel anywhere close to them. They have used the excuse of claiming harm to public health and safety and touting the "democratic" process of voting out anything or anyone they do not agree with. I do not think that health or safety are the real issues, nor do I think that the process has been democratic.

Clean energy projects exist all over the U.S. and throughout the world, including here in Michigan. These projects are generating both clean energy and significant public benefits for the communities that host them. For example, the Isabella Wind project in the county next door to where I live, started operating 2 years ago and has already paid more than \$10 million in taxes to support local townships, county services, and schools, in addition to creating dependable farm income for hundreds of landowners in the county.

For the local zoning process to be effective and fair, it must rely on a reasonable, well thought out, and well written ordinance. Unfortunately, in many communities, including my own, the process has proven anything but fair. Instead, opponents of renewable energy have worked to find the most restrictive and exclusionary ordinances that exist and to copy and paste their provisions and force them into place into our townships. Anything short of an outright ban on wind and solar is not acceptable to them. And if local officials are unwilling to go along with these restrictive and, potentially, illegal ordinances, they are harassed and intimidated until they resign or are recalled.

My local county has recalled 9 township officials and four townships have had almost complete turnover of elected officials and planning commission members and two more have had significant turnover. I have been saddened to see that many of the people who participated in the trainings I help make available and were making significant positive contributions to their local planning commission, throw up their hands and walk away from the abuse being heaped on them and the absolute determination of those at the meetings to not let them do anything but oppose and restrict wind turbines.

Other states have adopted statewide standards that provide adequate protection of public health and safety; preserve public input from local governments and residents; and protect the property rights of private landowners who should have the right to responsibly develop wind and solar projects on their land. Such standards include science-based setbacks, sound standards, decommissioning, and other siting issues. I am happy to see that Michigan may soon follow their lead and I am here today to urge you to support this bill.

Good zoning practice considers the interests of all of those who are affected by their decisions. A good zoning process will probably involve a situation where none of the parties are fully satisfied by the resulting decisions. In short, good zoning involves making compromises and trying to balance what may be the self-interests of the parties involved for the benefit of the larger community. That is not an easy or straightforward process, and it sadly can be all too easily misdirected, as we have seen happen at the local level in communities throughout Michigan.

The only solution I see that can help us deal with reality now is by using a process that is removed from local politics and emotion and evaluates these projects based on evidence, established science, and facts. The Michigan Public Service

Commission is well positioned to run this kind of process. I do not believe that we can establish this kind of process locally. I am asking you to help us find a solution. Please support House Bills 5120 thru 5123, so that communities like mine have a reasonable set of rules and procedures to guide the permitting of green energy projects.

Without your help, I fear that a vocal minority will continue to spread misinformation across communities in this state and will succeed in stopping our state's transition to clean energy.

Thank you.