



Stephen K. Melink, PE Founder & President of Melink Corporation (Cincinnati, Ohio)
Testimony on HB 301
Before the Alternative Energy Committee
November 30, 2010

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Alternative Energy Committee,

My name is Steve Melink, President of Melink Corporation in Cincinnati since its founding in 1987. Melink Corporation is a provider of energy efficiency products and services for retail, restaurant, supermarket, and hotel chains across the U.S. as well as hospitals, schools, and government facilities.

Our company has achieved local, state, national, and international recognition for our super- energy-efficient headquarters. In 2005 it became the first LEED Gold NC certified office building in Ohio. In 2010 it became the first LEED Platinum EB building in Ohio. And before the end of this year it will be a Net Zero Energy building, one of the first in the U.S. and even the world.

Much of our success in designing and building a super green building came as a direct result of Ohio's innovative Advanced Energy Fund. Through it we were able to finance several renewable energy systems including solar PV, solar thermal, and a wind turbine.

The local and regional market showed so much interest in what we were doing with renewable energy that we started up a third business in 2008 with a focus on solar PV. Two years later we have a team of 10 people dedicated to the sales, financing, design, installation, and maintenance of solar PV systems.

In fact, we are expecting to announce a major solar PV project in Cincinnati next week which will be the largest public education venue for solar in the United States. This and many other projects in our pipeline, as well as the pipelines of our fellow industry pioneers, are helping put Ohio on the map as a national leader in the deployment of solar PV.

This claim is further supported by the fact that during the national solar tour, Ohio had more sites to visit than any other state in the U.S. Most of this was made possible by the Advanced Energy Fund program. And certainly the passage of the advanced energy portfolio standard in 2008 also helped tremendously.

The bottom line is this: Ohio is on the verge of becoming a national leader in the deployment of solar PV.

With Toledo becoming the Silicon Valley for several solar manufacturers, and Ohio public policy leaders having the vision and courage to create an advanced energy portfolio standard with a solar carve-out, this emerging industry is uniquely positioned to help grow our state's economy and create jobs.

That is why it is so critically important to renew the AEF for a few more years and not pull the plug on the industry prematurely when it has great potential in reviving and rejuvenating our precarious economy. If we back down now, we will cede our leadership to states like New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and other states that are getting it like we got it 5-10 years ago.

The program has been funded through a super-small rider on the utility bills of homeowners and businesses served by Investor-owned utilities. At only \$0.09 per monthly bill, 99.99% of the rate payers do not even know or care about it. Yet it does so much good for our economy. It diversifies our energy portfolio, it makes our grid more reliable having more distributed generation, it creates jobs, and it saves customers money.

In the end, I am not here because my job depends on it. We have two other businesses that are rebounding very nicely from the Great Recession. I am here because I believe Ohio has a unique chance to lead the country and even the world in one of the greatest future economic opportunities of our lifetime: the clean energy economy. The solar and wind power industries have been one of the few bright spots in the global economy over the last few years and winding the clock back 10 years is no strategy for success.

As a business- owner I know from personal experience that sometimes it takes longer than 10 years to create a new industry and change markets. The cost of solar PV is coming down over time and the cost of coal-fired electricity is going up over time. The best answer to Ohio's energy needs is a diversified portfolio that hedges price risk.

I envision a future in the next 5 years when Ohio is able to attract new businesses and retain its brightest human resources because of our commitment to leading – not following – the new energy age. I envision our great State making solar panels and wind turbines and not only deploying them here in the greatest market in the Midwest if not U.S., but exporting them to other states and countries.

I envision our economy, national security, and environment all being better than they are today because we didn't call it quits. Like the Wright Brothers, John Glenn, and Neil Armstrong, we forged a new path that is equally great and exciting as the one they forged. While we should never let go of our past heritage, we should also never give up on thinking big and leading in new frontiers such as renewable energy.

Given the minimal risk of renewing the program, versus the grave risk of killing the program as well as the emerging renewable energy industry, I ask this Committee to support its renewal.

Thank you.