



## OEC [ Action Fund ]

**Testimony on Ordinance 1642-2020, Authorizing Performance of Actions to Effect  
a Governmental Electricity Aggregation Program for the City of Columbus  
Miranda Leppla, Vice President of Energy Policy  
July 20th, 2020**

Council President Hardin, and members of Columbus City Council, my name is Miranda Leppla, and I'm the Vice President of Energy Policy for the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund. Part of the OEC Action Fund's mission is to protect and enhance the environment and the health of all Ohio communities by advancing critical policy priorities. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of Ordinance 1642-2020 to authorize the City of Columbus to perform necessary actions to aggregate Columbus's electricity usage and move our city to 100% renewable energy. While we wish we could be with you to testify in person, as a science-based organization, the OEC Action Fund appreciates the caution being taken by Council in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and your encouragement for members of the public to take part remotely, so I am pleased to join you via webcast instead this evening.

The legislation you are considering tonight clearly sets forth important goals for the city: (1) to provide competitive retail energy supply costs for Columbus citizens and small businesses; (2) support renewable energy development, ***especially local renewable energy generation***, to advance Columbus' sustainable economy; and (3) to ensure that the energy supplier(s) provide quality, reliable service and first-rate customer service.<sup>1</sup> The City's effort to shift such a large amount of electricity usage toward clean renewable energy, and to do it in a way that ensures investment in our city's future comes at a critical time, and the OEC Action Fund urges you to pass Ordinance 1642-2020 tonight to put community choice aggregation on the ballot this November.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Columbus, proposed Ordinance #1642-2020 at 1; see also City of Columbus, *Request for Columbus Community Choice Aggregation Preferred Electric Supplier Qualifications* at 14.

The people most impacted by climate change are often the most vulnerable in our society, and that is true here in Columbus as well. In fact, a 2015 report<sup>2</sup> commissioned by the City of Columbus identified the impacts, and the vulnerabilities that Columbus residents face with a warming climate. Residents can expect to experience dangerously hot days with an additional three to seven weeks per year of temperatures exceeding 90F degrees, deteriorated air quality leading to greater incidence of asthma attacks and other respiratory conditions, and potential for contamination of water supplies due to stronger storms, runoff, and sewer overflows.<sup>3</sup>

Fighting climate change means fighting to protect all Columbus residents, particularly those that are already disproportionately impacted by warmer, wetter conditions, and worsening air quality. For example, Columbus families and small businesses may suffer greater economic hardship due to longer, more intense heat waves because they may need to increase the usage of air conditioning over spring, summer and fall.

As a result of our legislature dismantling Ohio's critically important state renewable portfolio and energy efficiency standards, money- and energy-saving efficiency rebate programs will disappear, impacting communities with low incomes the most. But Columbus's aggregation effort to move to 100% renewable energy and bolster efficiency city-wide opens a new door through which we can address environmental injustices in our community and is a welcome breath of fresh air.

The OEC Action Fund is pleased to see that the Ordinance goes beyond just a symbolic gesture of setting a renewable energy target. The text highlights **the City's goal to support local clean energy generation, energy efficiency, and other policy priorities that benefit our community**, and asks that this be taken on an emergency basis to **permit energy efficiency initiatives to commence as soon as possible**, which will help fill the gap left behind by the legislature's abandonment of statewide efficiency measures. As the largest city in Ohio that has yet to aggregate, and the largest city in the state, Columbus's commitment to achieve 100% renewables by 2022 through aggregation shifts an enormous amount of energy usage toward clean energy, ensuring a sustainable future for central Ohio, and also bringing benefits statewide in the fight for cleaner air.

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<sup>2</sup> [Climate Change in Columbus Ohio: An Assessment of Columbus' Key Climate Changes, Impacts and Vulnerabilities of Concern](#), Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessment (GLISA) and the University of Michigan Climate Center; Other key partners in this process included The Ohio State University, the Natural Resource Defense Council, and the University of Michigan Climate Center, March, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pgs. 11-13.

By voting tonight to put community choice aggregation on the ballot, you give Columbus voters the opportunity to permit the city to pool our energy and use our bulk purchasing power to invest big in clean, renewable power. Importantly, the Sustainable Columbus Community Choice Aggregation program can also be used as a tool to create innovative programs that help save residents money and implement energy-saving programs, creating economic benefits locally that can begin to address inequities in our community.

The strong focus on building local clean energy projects from the outset of the aggregation program ensures benefits for Columbus and all of Central Ohio. There will be air quality improvements directly in our community from reducing our carbon footprint, providing cleaner air to breathe to the poorest air quality neighborhoods of Columbus. Increased local renewable generation will ensure that our residents and businesses reap the economic benefits that solar, wind and energy efficiency can bring to the community. The city can focus on workforce development opportunities in the renewable energy sector, boosting the central Ohio economy and growing sustainable jobs in the clean energy sector moving forward.

The Community Grants program, included in the preferred supplier request, could be used to jumpstart the energy efficiency work through the city's Sustainable Steps program. This component of the Sustainable Columbus Community Choice Aggregation program could create a new rebate revenue program to fill the gap left behind from the state legislation that ended state energy efficiency programs. Creating a fund for this purpose would help ensure that the residents of the six Columbus neighborhoods who had home energy audits during 2019 and 2020 through the Sustainable Steps Community Energy Savers program are actually able to implement the recommended efficiency improvements in their homes. The creative options available to encourage and support clean energy and energy efficiency for residents and small businesses through a community choice aggregation program are yet another reason the OEC Action Fund is so excited to see Columbus move to aggregate its significant consumption -- an estimated 1,699,332 MWh.

Additionally, the OEC Action Fund is pleased to see that the proposed ballot language includes the city's commitment to the goals discussed above. By clearly stating that the measure is to **“support local clean energy generation, energy savings, and Columbus's sustainable economy”**, the voters of Columbus and our future leaders know that Columbus passed the ballot measure because they support renewable energy and want to see Columbus take bold action on climate change.

Columbus is a young, smart city with progressive thinkers dedicated to creating a better future for everyone who calls Columbus home. Passing an aggressive community choice aggregation plan will put Columbus on the map, yet again, as a smart, sustainable, thriving midwest city where folks want to live and are able to have clean air to breathe when they do. Going 100% renewable and investing in energy efficiency measures shows that Columbus is working to address the impacts of climate change for all of its residents, including the most vulnerable, by ensuring the benefits of cleaner air are available to all residents. Further, and most importantly, the aggregation measure is a much needed step toward remedying environmental injustices within our community and lays the groundwork to move forward rapidly to fix these inequities in our city.

Thank you for holding this public hearing and hearing our testimony. The OEC Action Fund urges Council to pass Ordinance 1642-2020 to put community choice aggregation that gets Columbus to 100% renewable energy on the ballot, creating a more sustainable future for all Columbus citizens.