

Chairwoman Scott, Members of the House Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue, which is very important to me and my family.

My name is Clara Ostrander and I live in Milan Township in Monroe County, Michigan. Our family owns two centennial farmsteads, including the home I live in, which has been in our family for over 150 years.

My parents were full-time farmers. My dad farmed about 500 acres in the township, raising corn, soybeans, wheat, and oats. Being raised on a family farm, we learned hard work and dedication – that's just been part of my entire life. I went to Michigan State University where I got my bachelor's degree in animal science. We continue to raise and show animals as a family to this day.

Farming is, in my opinion, one of the toughest careers anyone can go into. Over the years, I have attended many, many auctions where farmers are forced to sell their equipment because of bankruptcy. Being a farmer is a gamble. One year can be a tremendous crop and the next year it can just go down the drain. In recent years, the cost of fertilizer, fuel and seed have only added to that challenge.

For our family, those challenges hit home in the 1990s when my mother came down with a severe illness. In order to pay my mom's rising healthcare bills, my dad was forced to sell part of our farm. To this day I would give anything to be able to buy that back for my dad. But he knew that was what he had to do. My mom's hospital bills were over half a million dollars, even with health insurance.

Fast forward to today, my husband and I are facing medical issues of our own. Our greatest fear is that we will have to do the same thing my dad did – sell the rest of

the farm, our family's heritage, to pay for medical expenses instead of passing it on to the next generation.

Fortunately, we found an opportunity that would help keep the farm in the family by hosting a solar farm – using our land to harvest sunlight and generate clean power. At first, we were very hesitant, so we did our research. We reached out to experts at Michigan State and U of M. I thought about my parents and grandparents – I even asked them for guidance. I know my dad would be happy that we ultimately decided to sign up to host solar on our farm. If he were still alive he would be smiling and saying, "This is what we need."

When we signed our lease, our township had recently passed an ordinance that allowed solar on agricultural land like ours, with common sense regulations similar to those included in this bill. That ordinance gave us the confidence to move forward as part of the project.

Unfortunately, as the project began doing outreach in the community, a few loud voices began to spread falsehoods and misinformation about the project. They denigrated landowners and families who had served our township for years. They filed frivolous recall petitions against local officials, and when our township supervisor tragically passed away they pressured his replacement to change the ordinance to ban solar on our land, effectively putting the project on hold.

People in our township were spun into a frenzy because they were lied to by people who didn't want their view to change. The problem with that is they don't own their view – their view is farmland that families like mine have tended, preserved, and paid taxes on for generations. They should not get to decide what

we grow or what we harvest, and that includes harvesting the sun for electricity. We need a responsible neutral party like the Michigan Public Service Commission to review these projects based on facts, not fear or falsehoods. I thank you for giving this important issue the attention it deserves and hope you vote to protect the property rights of farm families by voting yes on these bills.

Thank you.