



**Green Policy Options for Cuyahoga County
Ohio BlueGreen Apollo Alliance and Policy Matters Ohio
Cuyahoga County Environment & Sustainability Committee Meeting
Friday, July 29, 2011
Testimony of Shanelle Smith, Ohio BlueGreen Apollo Alliance**

Chairperson Rogers, Vice Chairperson Simon, and other members of the committee: My name is Shanelle Smith, and I am the Senior Ohio Coordinator of the Ohio BlueGreen Apollo Alliance, a coalition of business, labor, and environmental groups. My work centers around advocating for policies to grow the clean energy economy and create good green jobs here in Ohio.

Our economy, our communities, our workforce, and our environment are at a crossroads. Past practices and policies of the conventional energy economy produced an economy with vast amounts of waste and low road economic development that left our workers behind, our communities impoverished, our residents dependent on fossil fuels imported from out of state, and our environment polluted. Ohioans spent more than \$54 billion on energy in 2008 created from fossil fuels purchased largely from outside Ohio. Among states, Ohio ranks 30th for our level of energy productivity. As a result, more than \$40 billion leaves our state each year to purchase fossil fuels from outside Ohio. For public workers, shrinking state and municipal budgets and privatization have eroded job security. At the same time, rising food and fuel prices, skyrocketing healthcare costs, and the foreclosure crisis have all made it difficult for workers to support their families.

Despite the demise of federal climate change legislation, cities across the nation continue efforts started under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to revitalize their communities and make them more sustainable. One of the most inspiring examples is very local.

In a recent report, *Local Sustainability: Menu of Options*, Policy Matters Ohio documents best practices from cities around the country as a menu of local policy options for a comprehensive sustainability strategy in Oberlin, and beyond. Many of these same strategies would also work in Cuyahoga County.

Fulfilling aggressive goals for Cuyahoga County will best be accomplished with a thorough approach that addresses all energy-using and emissions-producing sectors. The Green Policy Options for Cuyahoga County Council memo we provided and the local sustainability report by Policy Matters detail many options, some of which Cuyahoga County is already implementing. Here are a few we believe will work.

Community Energy Planning. Communities across the nation are engaging in energy planning to better understand how their residents, businesses, institutions and local governments are using energy; determine where it comes from; identify resources leaving the region as a result of fossil fuels purchased from elsewhere; and identify sources of emissions. In turn, they are developing long term plans for becoming more energy independent and locally self-reliant in meeting energy needs, by developing industrial, commercial, residential, and transportation sustainability strategies to increase use of renewable energy sources and reduce use of fossil fuels. They are also constructing plans to demonstrate how the local government and core institutions within the region can lead by example. Cuyahoga County can develop a regional vision of sustainability that crosses sectors and community lines. The County can also provide technical assistance to Cities within its border to develop their own community energy plans.

Reduce emissions in the Electric Power Sector. In Ohio, nearly 70 percent of all energy generated at centralized electric power plants is lost during generation or transmission, resulting in a waste of scarce resources and unnecessary toxic and carbon emissions. Communities across the nation are using policy to encourage more distributed and efficient generation in the electric power sector. Some tools include using municipal power authority to promote clean energy development, setting renewable energy targets, conducting community outreach, providing technical assistance, organizing bulk purchasing for discounted rates, engaging in comprehensive long-term planning to guide local energy decisions; and streamlining permitting processes and utility interconnection standards. One of the most exciting policy developments is the utility use of CLEAN contracts (Clean Local Energy Accessible Now), or a feed-in tariff, a set of published rates at which a utility company buys clean energy from local developers

Local Government and Anchor Institutions in the Community: Government and anchor institutions give us an opportunity to lead by example. The most successful sector thus far in adopting sustainability measures is known as the MUSH market (Municipalities, Universities, Schools, and Hospitals). Things that these entities can do to lead by example are: Examine their own energy use, develop strategies to reduce their own energy use and increase use of alternative energy, set goals, encourage energy saving behavior among employees, faculty and students, and develop green, local, and efficient purchasing guidelines. Many cities and campuses are using power purchase agreements to purchase renewable energy systems, and Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) to capture energy savings. Cuyahoga County could work with Emerald Cities Cleveland to develop outreach and financing options for its Cuyahoga County Municipal Energy Program.

We would love to roll up our sleeves and help the Environment and Sustainability Committee sort through the options, figure out what makes sense, assess the impact of those policies, and identify any barriers to adopting policy options and potential solutions. It can be complemented by a workforce strategy to ensure jobs created from green investments are good jobs accessible by local residents.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I'll be happy to answer your questions.