

ENERGY FOCUS, INC/DE
Form 424B3
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Registration No. 333-228255

PROSPECTUS

\$50,000,000

ENERGY FOCUS, INC.

Common Stock

We may offer and sell shares of our common stock from time to time in amounts, at prices and on terms that will be determined at the time of the offering. The aggregate offering price of all securities sold by us pursuant to this prospectus will not exceed \$50,000,000.

This prospectus describes the general manner in which the shares of our common stock may be offered and sold. The specific manner in which shares of common stock may be offered and sold will be described in one or more prospectus supplements.

You should carefully read this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement, together with the documents we incorporate by reference, before you invest in our common stock.

Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Capital Market under the symbol "EFOI." On December 11, 2018, the last reported sale price for our common stock was \$0.987 per share.

The aggregate market value of our outstanding common stock held by non-affiliates is \$11,736,735 based on 12,078,160 shares of outstanding common stock, of which 186,838 shares are held by non-affiliates, and a per share price of \$0.987 based on the closing sale price of our common stock on December 11, 2018. Pursuant to General Instruction I.B.6 of Form S-3, in no event will we sell our common stock in a public primary offering with a value exceeding more than one-third of our public float in any 12-month period so long as our public float remains below \$75,000,000. We have not offered any securities pursuant to General Instruction I.B.6. of Form S-3 during the prior 12 calendar month period that ends on and includes the date of this prospectus.

Investing in our common stock involves substantial risk. Please read "Risk Factors" beginning on page 3 of this prospectus and any risk factors described in any applicable prospectus supplement and in the documents we incorporate by reference.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is December 12, 2018.

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ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is a part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”) utilizing a “shelf” registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may sell the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities under this shelf registration, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in any documents that we have incorporated by reference into this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement, together with the information incorporated herein by reference as described under the heading “Information Incorporated by Reference.”

You should rely only on the information that we have provided or incorporated by reference in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement. We have not authorized any dealer, salesman or other person to give any information or to make any representation other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement. You should not rely upon any information or representation not contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus or the accompanying prospectus supplement. We take no responsibility for, and can provide no assurance as to the reliability of, any other information that others may give you.

This prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement do not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy any securities other than the registered securities to which they relate, nor do this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy securities in any jurisdiction to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation in such jurisdiction. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement is accurate on any date subsequent to the date set forth on the front of the document or that any information we have incorporated by reference is correct on any date subsequent to the date of the document incorporated by reference, even though this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement is delivered or securities are sold on a later date.

Unless the context otherwise requires, all references to “Energy Focus,” “we,” “us,” “our,” “our company,” or “the Company” this prospectus refer to Energy Focus, Inc., a Delaware corporation, and its subsidiary, and their respective predecessor entities for the applicable periods, considered as a single enterprise.

SUMMARY

This summary highlights certain information appearing elsewhere in this prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference into this prospectus. The summary is not complete and does not contain all of the information that you should consider before investing in our common stock. After you read this summary, you should read and consider carefully the entire prospectus and any prospectus supplement and the more detailed information and financial statements and related notes that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus and any prospectus supplement. If you invest in our shares, you are assuming a high degree of risk.

Our Company and Business

Energy Focus, Inc. and its subsidiary engage in the design, development, manufacturing, marketing, and sale of energy-efficient lighting systems. We operate in a single industry segment, developing and selling our energy-efficient light-emitting diode (“LED”) lighting products into the general commercial, industrial and military maritime markets. Our mission is to enable our customers to run their facilities with greater energy efficiency, productivity, and wellness through advanced LED retrofit solutions. Our goal is to be the retrofit technology and market leader for the most demanding applications where performance, quality, and health really matter. We specialize in LED lighting retrofit by replacing fluorescent lamps in institutional buildings and high-intensity discharge (“HID”) lighting in low-bay and high-bay applications with our innovative, high-quality commercial and military tubular LED (“TLED”) and other LED products.

Product development is a key focus for us. Our product development teams, including our teams located in our Solon, Ohio headquarters, at our San Jose, California technology center, and at our product development center in Taipei, Taiwan, are dedicated to developing and designing leading-edge technology LED lighting products.

The Company was founded in 1985 as Fiberstars, Inc., a California corporation, and reincorporated in Delaware in November 2006. In May 2007, Fiberstars, Inc. merged with and became Energy Focus, Inc., also a Delaware corporation. Our principal executive offices are located at 32000 Aurora Road, Suite B, Solon, Ohio 44139. Our telephone number is 440.715.1300. Our website address is www.energyfocus.com. Information on our website is not part of this prospectus.

The Offering

We may offer shares of our common stock, from time to time under this prospectus, together with any applicable prospectus supplement, at prices and on terms to be determined at the time of offering, up to a maximum aggregate offering price equal to the amount set forth on the cover page of this prospectus. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we offer shares of our common stock, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will describe the specific amounts, prices and other important terms of the securities and the offering. A prospectus supplement to be provided to you may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in documents we have incorporated by reference.

We may sell shares of our common stock directly to or through underwriters, dealers or agents. If we do offer shares of our common stock through underwriters or agents, we will include in the applicable prospectus supplement:

- the names of those underwriters or agents;
- applicable fees, discounts and commissions to be paid to them;

details regarding over-allotment options, if any; and

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the net proceeds to us.

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RISK FACTORS

Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider and evaluate the risk factors included in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q that we file with the SEC, which are incorporated herein by reference, together with the risk factors and other information contained in or incorporated by reference into the applicable prospectus supplement, before making an investment decision. The occurrence of any of these risks and uncertainties could harm our business, financial condition, results of operations or growth prospects. As a result, the trading price of our common stock could decline, and you could lose all or part of your investment.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and any prospectus supplement contains and incorporates by reference statements that express our opinions, expectations, beliefs, plans, objectives, assumptions or projections regarding future events or future results and therefore are, or may be deemed to be, “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the “Securities Act”). These forward-looking statements can generally be identified by the use of forward-looking terminology, including the terms “believes,” “estimates,” “anticipates,” “expects,” “feels,” “seek,” “forecasts,” “projects,” “intends,” “plans,” “may,” “will,” “should,” “could” or “would” or, in each case, their negative or other or comparable terminology. These forward-looking statements include all matters that are not historical facts. They appear in a number of places throughout this prospectus and any prospectus supplement and in the documents incorporated by reference herein and include statements regarding our intentions, beliefs, or current expectations concerning, among other things, our results of operations, financial condition, liquidity, prospects, growth, strategies, capital expenditures, and the industry in which we operate.

By their nature, forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties because they relate to events and depend on circumstances that may or may not occur in the future. Although we base these forward-looking statements on assumptions that we believe are reasonable when made, we caution you that forward-looking statements are not guarantees of future performance and that our actual results of operations, financial condition and liquidity, and industry developments may differ materially from statements made in or suggested by the forward-looking statements contained in this prospectus and any prospectus supplement. In addition, even if our results of operations, financial condition and liquidity, and industry developments are consistent with the forward-looking statements contained in this prospectus and any prospectus supplement, those results or developments may not be indicative of results or developments in subsequent periods.

We believe that important factors that could cause our actual results to differ materially from forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, the risks and uncertainties outlined in the “Risk Factors” incorporated by reference into this prospectus from our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and contained in or incorporated by reference into any prospectus supplement and other matters described herein generally. Some of these factors include:

- our history of operating losses and our ability to generate sufficient cash from operations or receive sufficient financing, on acceptable terms, including under current borrowing conditions, to continue our operations;
- our reliance on a limited number of customers, in particular our historical sales of products for the U.S. Navy, for a significant portion of our revenue, and our ability to maintain or grow such sales levels;
- the entrance of new competitors in our target markets;
- general economic conditions in the United States and in other markets in which we sell our products;
- our ability to implement and manage our growth plans to increase sales, and control expenses;
- our ability to increase demand in our targeted markets and to manage sales cycles that are difficult to predict and may span several quarters;
- the timing of large customer orders and significant expenses, and fluctuations between demand and capacity, as we invest in growth opportunities;

our dependence on military maritime customers and on the levels of government funding available to such customers, as well as funding resources of our other customers in the public sector and commercial markets;

market acceptance of LED lighting technology;

our ability to respond to new lighting technologies and market trends, and fulfill our warranty obligations with safe and reliable products;

any delays we may encounter in making new products available or fulfilling customer specifications;

our ability to compete effectively against companies with greater resources, lower cost structures, or more rapid development efforts;

our ability to protect our intellectual property rights and other confidential information, and manage infringement claims by others;

the impact of any type of legal inquiry, claim, or dispute;

our reliance on a limited number of third-party suppliers, our ability to obtain critical components and finished products from such suppliers on acceptable terms, and the impact of our fluctuating demand on the stability of such suppliers;

our ability to timely and efficiently transport products from our third-party suppliers to our facility by ocean marine channels;

- our ability to successfully scale our network of sales representatives, agents, and distributors to match the sales reach of larger, established competitors;

any flaws or defects in our products or in the manner in which they are used or installed;

our compliance with government contracting laws and regulations, through both direct and indirect sale channels, as well as other laws, such as those relating to the environment and health and safety;

risks inherent in international markets, such as economic and political uncertainty, changing regulatory and tax requirements and currency fluctuations including tariffs and other potential barriers to international trade;

our ability to attract and retain qualified personnel, and to do so in a timely manner; and

our ability to maintain effective internal controls and otherwise comply with our obligations as a public company and Nasdaq listing standards.

In light of the foregoing, we caution you not to place undue reliance on our forward-looking statements. Any forward-looking statement that we make in this prospectus and any prospectus supplement speaks only as of the date of such statement, and we undertake no obligation to update any forward-looking statement or to publicly announce the results of any revision to any of those statements to reflect future events or developments. Comparisons of results for current and any prior periods are not intended to express any future trends or indications of future performance, unless specifically expressed as such, and should only be viewed as historical data.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless the applicable prospectus supplement states otherwise, we expect to use the net proceeds of the sale of the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus for general corporate purposes. As of the date of this prospectus, we have not identified as probable any specific material proposed uses of these proceeds. If, as of the date of any prospectus supplement, we have identified any such uses, we will describe them in the prospectus supplement.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following summary of certain provisions of our securities does not purport to be complete. You should refer to our certificate of incorporation and our bylaws, both of which are incorporated by reference as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. The summary below is also qualified by applicable law.

General. The Company is authorized to issue 30,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.0001 per share, and 2,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.0001 per share. As of November 1, 2018, there were 12,074,521 shares of common stock outstanding and no shares of preferred stock outstanding. As of November 1, 2018, there were approximately 83 record holders of our common stock. All shares of common stock outstanding are fully paid and nonassessable. As of November 1, 2018, 3,000,000 authorized shares of common stock have been reserved for issuance under our equity incentive plans and employee stock purchase plan, including options to purchase 295,471 shares of our common stock, of which options to purchase 144,191 shares were exercisable, 569,054 unvested restricted stock awards, 1,256,739 shares available for future equity award grants under the 2014 Stock Incentive Plan and 414,019 shares available for future purchases under the 2013 Employee Stock Purchase Plan.

Voting. Holders of common stock are entitled to one vote per share on all matters to be voted upon by stockholders. In accordance with Delaware law, the affirmative vote of a majority of the shares represented and voting at a duly held meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the stockholders. The shares of common stock have no pre-emptive rights, no redemption or sinking fund provisions, and are not liable for further call or assessment.

Dividends. The holders of common stock are entitled to receive dividends when and as declared by our Board of Directors out of funds legally available for dividends. We have not declared or paid any cash dividends and we do not anticipate paying cash dividends in the foreseeable future.

Liquidation. Upon a liquidation of the Company, our creditors and holders of our preferred stock with preferential liquidation rights will be paid before any distribution to holders of our common stock. The holders of common stock would be entitled to receive a pro rata distribution per share of any excess amount.

Preferred Stock. Our certificate of incorporation empowers our Board of Directors to issue up to 2,000,000 shares of preferred stock from time to time in one or more series. Our Board of Directors may fix the designation, privileges, preferences and rights and the qualifications, limitations and restrictions of those shares, including dividend rights, conversion rights, voting rights, redemption rights, terms of sinking funds, liquidation preferences and the number of shares constituting any additional series or the designation of the series. Terms selected could decrease the amount of earnings and assets available for distribution to holders of our common stock or adversely affect the rights and power, including voting rights, of the holders of our common stock without any further vote or action by the stockholders. The rights of holders of common stock will be subject to, and may be adversely affected by, the rights of the holders of any preferred stock that may be issued by us in the future. The issuance of preferred stock could have the effect of delaying or preventing a change in control of us or make removal of management more difficult. Additionally, the

issuance of preferred stock may have the effect of decreasing the

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market price of our common stock, and may adversely affect the voting and other rights of the holders of common stock. Our Board of Directors has designated 100,000 shares of our preferred stock as Series A Participating Preferred Stock.

Antitakeover Effects of Our Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws. Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws contain certain provisions that are intended to enhance the likelihood of continuity and stability in the composition of our Board of Directors and that may have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a future takeover or change in control of the Company unless that takeover or change in control is approved by our Board of Directors.

These provisions include:

Action by Written Consent. Our bylaws provide that stockholder action can be taken only at an annual or special meeting of stockholders and cannot be taken by written consent in lieu of a meeting.

Advance Notice Procedures. Our bylaws establish an advance notice procedure for stockholder proposals to be brought before an annual meeting of our stockholders, including proposed nominations of persons for election to the Board of Directors. Stockholders at an annual meeting are only able to consider proposals or nominations specified in the notice of meeting or brought before the meeting by or at the direction of the Board of Directors or by a stockholder who was a stockholder of record on the record date for the meeting, who is entitled to vote at the meeting and who has given our Secretary timely written notice, in accordance with our bylaws, of the stockholder's intention to bring that business before the meeting. Although the bylaws do not give the Board of Directors the power to approve or disapprove stockholder nominations of candidates or proposals regarding other business to be conducted at a special or annual meeting, the bylaws may have the effect of precluding the conduct of certain business at a meeting if the proper procedures are not followed or may discourage or deter a potential acquirer from conducting a solicitation of proxies to elect its own slate of directors or otherwise attempting to obtain control of the Company.

Authorized but Unissued Shares. Our authorized but unissued shares of common stock and preferred stock are available for future issuance without stockholder approval. These additional shares may be utilized for a variety of corporate purposes, including future public offerings to raise additional capital, corporate acquisitions and employee benefit plans. The existence of authorized but unissued shares of common stock and preferred stock could render more difficult or discourage an attempt to obtain control of a majority of our common stock by means of a proxy contest, tender offer, merger or otherwise.

Limitations on Liability and Indemnification of Officers and Directors. Our certificate of incorporation limits the liability of our directors to the fullest extent permitted by the Delaware General Corporation Law, and our bylaws provide that we will indemnify our directors and officers to the fullest extent permitted by such law.

Listing. Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Capital Market under the symbol "EFOI."

Transfer Agent and Registrar. The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Broadridge Corporate Issuer Solutions, P.O. Box 1342, Brentwood, New York 11717.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell securities in any of the ways described below or in any combination thereof:

• or through underwriters, brokers or dealers;

through one or more agents; or

directly to purchasers or to a single purchaser.

The distribution of the securities may be effected from time to time in one or more transactions:

at a fixed price, or prices, which may be changed from time to time;

at market prices prevailing at the time of sale;

- at prices related to such prevailing market prices; or

at negotiated prices.

Each prospectus supplement will describe the method of distribution of the securities and any applicable restrictions.

The prospectus supplement with respect to each offering will describe the terms of the offering of the securities, including the following:

the name or names of any underwriters, dealers or agents;

the purchase price of the offered securities and the proceeds we will receive from the sale;

any underwriting discounts and commissions or agency fees and other items constituting underwriters' or agents' compensation; and

any initial offering price (if a fixed price offering) and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers.

Any common stock sold pursuant to this prospectus and applicable prospectus supplement will be approved for trading, upon notice of issuance, on the NASDAQ Capital Market or such other stock exchange that our securities are then trading upon.

Only the agents or underwriters named in each prospectus supplement are agents or underwriters in connection with the securities being offered thereby.

Agents, underwriters and other third parties described above may be entitled to indemnification by us against certain civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribution from us with respect to payments which the agents, underwriters or third parties may be required to make in respect thereof.

Agents, underwriters and such other third parties may be customers of, engage in transactions with, or perform services for us in the ordinary course of business. We may also use underwriters or such other third parties with whom we have a material relationship. We will describe the nature of any such relationship in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Certain persons participating in an offering may engage in overallotment, stabilizing transactions, short covering transactions and penalty bids in accordance with rules and regulations under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"). Overallotment involves sales in excess of the offering size, which create a short position. Stabilizing transactions permit bids to purchase the underlying security so long as the stabilizing bids do not exceed a specified maximum. Short covering transactions involve purchases of the securities in the open market after

the distribution is completed to cover short positions. Penalty bids permit the underwriters to reclaim a selling concession from a dealer when the securities originally sold by the dealer are purchased in a covering transaction to cover short positions. Those activities may cause the price of the

securities to be higher than it would otherwise be. If commenced, the underwriters or other persons may discontinue any of the activities at any time.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the shares of common stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Baker & Hostetler LLP, Cleveland, Ohio. Certain legal matters in connection with this offering will be passed upon for any agents or underwriters by counsel for such agents or underwriters identified in the applicable prospectus supplement.

EXPERTS

The financial statements as of and for the year ended December 31, 2017 incorporated by reference in this prospectus and registration statement have been audited by Plante & Moran, PLLC, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their report incorporated herein by reference, and are incorporated in reliance upon such report and upon the authority of such firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act that registers the shares of our common stock to be offered pursuant to this prospectus. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement and the exhibits and schedules thereto. For further information with respect to us and our common stock, you should refer to the registration statement and the exhibits and schedules filed as a part of the registration statement. Statements contained in or incorporated by reference into this prospectus concerning the contents of any contract or any other document are not necessarily complete. If a contract or document has been filed as an exhibit to the registration statement or one of our filings with the SEC that is incorporated by reference into the registration statement, we refer you to the copy of the contract or document that has been filed. Each statement contained in or incorporated by reference into this prospectus relating to a contract or document filed as an exhibit is qualified in all respects by the filed exhibit.

We are subject to the informational requirements of the Exchange Act and, in accordance therewith, file reports and other information with the SEC. The registration statement, reports and other information we file with the SEC can be read and copied at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington D.C. 20549. You may obtain information regarding the operation of the public reference room by calling 1-800-SEC-0330. The SEC also maintains a website (<http://www.sec.gov>) that contains reports, proxy and information statements and other information that we file electronically with the SEC. The information we file with the SEC is also available on our website, www.energyfocusinc.com. Our website, and the information contained on or accessible through our website, is not part of this prospectus.

INFORMATION INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to "incorporate by reference" the information that we file with it, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus, and information in documents that we file later with the SEC will automatically update and supersede information contained in or incorporated into this prospectus.

We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and any future filings made by us with the SEC under Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act between the date hereof and the termination of the offering pursuant to this prospectus (other than any information “furnished” rather than “filed”):

- (a) Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for our fiscal year ended December 31, 2017, filed with the SEC on February 22, 2018.
- (b) Our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for fiscal quarters ended March 31, 2018 and June 30, 2018 filed with the SEC on May 2, 2018 and August 8, 2018, respectively.
- (c) Our Current Reports on Form 8-K, filed with the SEC on April 17, 2018, May 22, 2018, and June 20, 2018.

- (d) The description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A, registering our common stock under Section 12(b) under the Exchange Act, filed with the SEC on July 29, 2014, as supplemented by the “Description of Capital Stock” found on page 6 of this prospectus and including any amendments or reports filed for the purpose of updating such description.

We also incorporate by reference all documents we file (but not furnish) with the SEC under Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act between the filing date and effective date of this registration statement.

You may request a copy of these filings, at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address: Energy Focus, Inc., 32000 Aurora Road, Suite B, Solon, Ohio 44139; telephone number (440) 715-1300.