

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Daniel J. Sawmiller, Ohio Energy Policy Director

on House Bill 201

Before the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee



Columbus, Ohio

June 15, 2021

Chair McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to HB201. My name is Dan Sawmiller and I'm the Ohio Energy Policy Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). NRDC is an international non-profit environmental organization working to protect the world's natural resources, public health and the environment.

Throughout the last year of public health emergencies and the corresponding economic uncertainty, we have all witnessed the power of communities coming together to create solutions to the challenges they've faced. Having the ability, and flexibility, to respond to local needs is critical as new risks and opportunities are identified at the local level over time. House Bill 201 would strip Ohio communities of this important ability to craft innovative solutions for some of the issues that are most pressing today: improving the quality of the air we breathe in our homes today and avoiding unnecessary energy costs in the future.

Relevant to House Bill 201, having the ability to eliminate emissions from burning fossil fuels inside our homes provides major public health benefits. Gas and propane stoves release carbon monoxide, nitrogen compounds, formaldehyde, and other air pollutants that can exacerbate existing respiratory and health conditions, including asthma. If stoves are not properly vented, cooking with gas can lead to kitchen concentrations of nitrogen oxides considered unhealthy under outside air pollution standards and can increase the risk of children living in the home experiencing asthma symptoms by as much as 42 percent.

Occupants of efficient homes with electric appliances and their neighbors breathe healthier air by avoiding toxic gases from gas stoves, furnaces, and water heaters. In areas with heavy pollution burdens, particularly in low-income communities that experience disproportionately poor air quality, these indoor and outdoor air quality improvements are sorely needed.

Further, all-electric homes cost less and are faster to build than those heated with gas, lowering the cost of new housing and allowing more families to realize home ownership. Relying on efficient, electric-powered equipment avoids the need to connect a new building to the gas line in the street, and install a gas meter, gas piping, and combustion venting and safety equipment in the building, all of which can save thousands of dollars in construction costs.

Ohioans deserve to live and work in healthy, affordable, pollution-free buildings. Building energy codes allow communities to control the health of their indoor spaces, housing and energy costs, and the quality of their future climate.

But House Bill 201 takes away the rights of those communities to decide how their buildings are fueled. If enacted, it would mandate that Ohio's counties and cities continue to use antiquated, methane gas-powered buildings as opposed to modern, electric-powered building codes, and would make any commitment to clean energy and healthy air more costly to achieve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. NRDC urges you to oppose House Bill 201.