

March 24, 2021

Chairman Stephens, Vice Chairman Stewart, Ranking Member Weinstein and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I wish to thank you allowing Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 201. My name is Chris Ventura, and I am the Executive Director of Consumer Energy Alliance-Midwest.

On behalf of CEA and our more than 90,000 individual members in the Great Lakes Region, I wish to share our strong support of House Bill 201 that has been introduced by Rep. Stephens. We believe this legislation will offer important consumer protections for all Ohioans, especially those struggling to get by and seniors living on fixed-incomes.

Founded in 2006, CEA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing virtually every sector of the U.S. economy – from the iron and steel industry to truckers, airlines, agriculture, labor unions, restaurants, chemical manufacturers, small businesses, and families. Our members support a rational, all-of-the-above energy policy that utilizes all of our domestic natural resources – both traditional and renewable – while ensuring continued progress in protecting our shared environment.

Quite simply, HB 201 is commonsense legislation that ensures consumers can continue to choose to have access to affordable, reliable energy in their homes and businesses.

Across the country, we have witnessed an increase in irresponsible policies put forth by local governments that would have the unintended consequences of increasing prices while failing to achieve environmental goals.

To be clear, CEA supports actions that thoughtfully advance our nation towards a cleaner, more environmentally responsible energy future. We believe that responsible policies always consider the needs of consumers while leveraging and supporting the development of state-of-the-art technologies to improve our environmental stewardship, aiding in the continued reductions of all emissions.

However, misguided attempts to ban natural gas and propane service by forcing mandates onto consumers will lead to astronomical costs and jeopardize energy resources that are helping our nation reduce harmful emissions.

Here in Ohio, two-thirds of households use natural gas for home heating. Depending on the model selected, electrification mandates requiring the replacement of major appliances like hot water heaters, furnaces, gas stoves, gas dryers, installing a heat pump and other wiring and labor costs could top out at more than \$10,300 for each and every homeowner.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a January 2020 survey by CNBC found only 41% of Americans had enough savings to cover a \$1,000 emergency. For an Ohio homeowner or household that relies on natural gas or propane for heating, cooking and their daily energy needs, a service moratorium or an electrification mandate could be potentially ruinous.

Fortunately, reliable and affordable natural gas has helped minimize the financial burdens many of our neighbors and small businesses are facing across the state. In fact, according to a recent study from CEA, Ohio's energy consumers saved more than \$50 billion between 2006 and 2019 as a result of expanded and modernized natural gas infrastructure. Residential users alone saved more than \$20 billion on their utility bills, while commercial and industrial users saved more than \$24 billion combined.

These are real, life-changing savings for families and businesses: Savings families have relied on during this pandemic to make ends meet; savings businesses have relied on to make payroll and invest in their employees.

We can and must have energy that is affordable, reliable and meets our shared environmental goals. The fact remains that utilizing all of our resources like natural gas, coupled with more efficient wind and solar power generation, is leading us to a cleaner energy future with lower emissions.

The irony is that the groups supporting these harmful mandates ignore the tremendous air quality improvements and carbon reduction benefits that natural gas has provided our country and our state.

According to the U.S. EPA, for example, key pollutants have decreased across the board in Ohio including a 72 percent reduction in nitrogen oxides, a 94 percent reduction in sulfur dioxide, and, and a 66 percent reduction in volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Not to mention that Ohio's carbon dioxide emissions have declined over 15 percent since 1990.

The simple fact is we are moving toward a cleaner energy future. And, moving forward doesn't require creating an unworkable patchwork of local prohibitions which increases the cost and complexity of delivering the essential energy Ohioans deserve.

This is why HB 201 is critically important for consumers and why we urge the committee to pass this legislation.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 201. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.