



**Before the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Proponent Testimony on House Bill 201
March 24th, 2021**

Chair Stephens, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Weinstein and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Stephanie Kromer, and I am the Director of Energy and Environmental Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer opponent testimony on House Bill 201.

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, and we represent nearly 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

House Bill 201 creates safeguards for commercial and residential energy users' access to natural gas by preventing local governments from limiting or banning the fuel source. More importantly, this HB 201 protects customers' ability to choose what mix of energy sources works best for their needs.

Energy policy is of statewide concern since all Ohioans depend on reliable, affordable energy. Local level go-it-alone policies could undermine the entire state's competitive standing and hinder our state's diverse portfolio of energy sources because we constantly compete against other states, many of which are in the process of passing legislation to HB 201. The Ohio Chamber has been consistent proponent when it comes to advocating for energy policies that promote a diverse portfolio regulated at the state-level. HB 201 would stop the development of a cumbersome patchwork of local ordinances that would deter investment opportunities in our state by sending mixed messages to companies looking to invest in Ohio about the importance of clean, affordable and abundant natural gas.

Many companies have credited access to affordable energy supplies as one of the main reasons Ohio was selected for the expansion and construction of new manufacturing facilities throughout the state. For example, a CEO of an Ohio-based company stated in a 2017 Cleveland Plain Dealer article that the expansion of their operations “will be the first HBI facility in the Midwest and the first one in the Great Lakes,” He said, “We think of this as a great market opportunity that has been present for a long, long time, and now we can do it because in order to produce hot briquetted iron you need two things: iron ore, which we have plenty of, and affordable natural gas, which is something relatively new in the Midwest since the shale boom made natural gas affordable in the Great Lakes.”

Banning natural gas in residential and commercial buildings would have a negative impact on Ohio’s economy, businesses and families. The American Gas Association completed a study last summer that shows Columbus, Ohio residential and commercial customers would face much higher costs without natural gas. Between 2021 and 2040, the region’s customers would pay \$7.4 billion more for equipment, installation, maintenance, and in utility bills with only having electricity as their only choice. The higher costs would be approximately 31.2 times higher than the valuation of the benefits.

The effect that these bans have deny businesses and homeowners the service they need, want, and most commonly use to power their lives, heat their homes and run their operations. Limiting energy choice would effectively be forcing businesses and homeowners to replace the appliances they want to use –grills, hot water heaters, fireplaces, fryers, and furnaces—with less efficient and more costly ones.

By prohibiting local governments from interfering in consumer choice, HB 201 will protect retail establishments, manufacturers, consumers and, ultimately, our state’s overall economic competitiveness by allowing Ohioans to decide what fuel sources best suit their needs. For these reasons, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce respectfully asks of the committee to favorably report HB 201.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, and I will be happy to answer any questions from the committee.