

23 January, 2021

Dear Members of the Senate Utilities Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I am a resident of Lawrence, KS, a restaurant manager, and a citizen deeply concerned about the climate crisis facing humanity. I am exceptionally proud of our city for taking the steps it has to begin transitioning our community toward renewable sources of energy. The current bill under consideration, SB 24, will be a step in the wrong direction for several reasons. Misconceptions about the differences between gas and electricity are driving short-sighted decision-making. The premise of disallowing communities to make guidelines about types of energy because it limits consumers' right of choice is deeply flawed. Furthermore, an action like SB 24 is a violation of our state's constitution and an infringement on our city's right to self-determination.

Opponents of natural gas bans may first point to the efficiency of natural gas versus electricity for heating homes and cooking. While the energy conversion rate of natural gas is indeed higher in most cases than electricity, the actual results vary widely, dependent on a variety of factors, including the different models of appliances, the insulation and design of the building, and usage. As a restaurant manager, it is my responsibility to consider the implications of changing my business' operations to using only electric heating elements. The cost could be huge if we had to make the switch today. But in our particular case, the city allows fifteen years to make the switch! Meanwhile, the technology exists today to turn our post-consumer food waste into methane for cooking, saving a potent greenhouse gas from emission at the landfill. The independent generation of cooking fuel could have wide-ranging implications for the energy market - almost all positive for the consumer, and not the gas company.

Passing this bill on the premise of protecting consumer choice is laughable. The monopoly that exists surrounding energy generation and distribution in Kansas (and most everywhere else) precludes most citizens' ability to make changes if they wish. While the option to heat your home with a wood-burning stove certainly exists, the average citizen does not have access to land on which to gather that fuel. And while they might make their own choice to switch their own home entirely over to electricity, the costs upfront are prohibitive for the person of little means. The motivation to fix what isn't broken doesn't exist for those beyond the group of climate-concerned citizens like myself. But it is broken. Greenhouse gas emissions must be controlled, and they must be brought down quickly, or things will start to fall apart faster than anyone wants to think about. This is a task beyond the choices of the average citizen - beyond the speed of the market to adjust to on its own. Allowing municipal governments to lead the charge when the will doesn't exist at the state level is a necessity.

Finally, it is our right to decide we want to move on from fossil fuels. The constitution of our state provides for us to make our own laws regarding our city. A right that was protected by lawmakers most recently when state COVID-19 restrictions didn't fit what their constituents wanted to do. And certainly, it is a well-established precedent in our nation for governments to make laws regarding that which is a hazard to its citizens. Protect your citizens. Protect their access to *true* energy choice, not what is in the best interest of a corporation.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss further.

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