

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE, Date

LD 2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health
Effects of Natural Gas
-In Opposition-
January 23, 2024.

Good afternoon, Senate Chair Lawrence, House Chair Zeigler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Brandon Pelletier and I live in Benton Maine. I am the General Manager of Houle's Plumbing & Heating that has been servicing the great Waterville area for more than 70 years.

Often we work closely with Summit Natural Gas as well as Maine Natural Gas. We have converted many homes hand in hand over to natural gas. The fact that the infrastructure can be put in place without charge to the business or homeowner is a major benefit. Another major benefit is the savings compared to other fuel sources when correct natural gas equipment is installed. Having the incentives to switch has helped many of our customers switch from a failing heating system to a much more efficient natural gas system saving the environment as well as the owner money over time.

Honestly, in my opinion the State of Maine is behind in terms of infrastructure compared to the rest of the United States, most other parts of the United States rely almost solely on natural gas, not having to worry about fuel deliveries or if they will run out before the next delivery. Here at Houle's we actually switched to heating with natural gas from oil due to all the benefits of natural gas.

I oppose LD2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas because the proposed policy is reckless by making new gas installations cost prohibitive and by restricting expansion of gas into new communities. It is not right to remove fuel choice, preferred by 87% of Mainers while creating economic disadvantages for businesses.

The bill handicaps economic growth in communities and raises costs for growing communities, new residents, and new businesses. Any new customer or growing community will no longer benefit from socializing natural gas infrastructure costs. Growing communities, new homes and new businesses will bear the full cost of necessary gas infrastructure if they are able to request service at all. The state of Maine should continue to encourage growth and welcome new businesses and residents. This bill would discourage growth and serve to make Maine less competitive with its neighboring states.

The natural gas distribution system is the most resilient and reliable form of energy delivery due to its underground delivery features. This bill ignores those reliability benefits and threatens to expose Maine homes and businesses to increased power outages particularly during extreme weather events.

Restricting the expansion of gas infrastructure is shortsighted when Maine needs all energy tools available for an affordable, clean energy transition.

The bad policy promoted in this bill would negatively impact my business and the work that I do. I urge your opposition to LD2077 An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas and encourage you to vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS.

Respectfully submitted by:



Brandon Pelletier
General Manager
Houle's Plumbing & Heating