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January 23, 2024

Senator Mark Lawrence, Chair
Representative Paige Zeigler, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 2077, *An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas*.

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, thank you for the opportunity to provide our input and concerns related to LD 2077, *An Act Regarding Customer Costs and the Environmental and Health Effects of Natural Gas*.

LD 2007, in addition to prohibiting a gas utility from furnishing service or serve customers in a municipality that is outside of the utility's service area on June 30, 2024 and from offering or providing a promotional allowance to customers or potential customers, directs the Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) to work in collaboration with the Public Utilities Commission, the Efficiency Maine Trust, the Office of the Public Advocate and the Department of Environmental Protection, to prepare a report on indoor air quality and health impacts of fossil fuel combustion and leakage. Research required for the report include: 1) the levels of indoor air pollution generated by indoor fossil fuel combustion and leakage from indoor fossil fuel appliances in the State; 2) the health effects from indoor air pollution generated by indoor fossil fuel combustion and leakage from indoor fossil fuel appliances in the State; 3) the types of indoor air pollution associated with indoor fossil fuel combustion and leakage from indoor fossil fuel appliances; 4) the total greenhouse gas emissions associated with methane gas leakage from indoor fossil fuel appliances in the State; and 5) prior recommendations to reduce indoor air pollution, reduce negative health effects and reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by indoor fossil fuel appliances. The report is to be submitted to the Legislature by November 6, 2024.

The Maine CDC Environmental and Occupational Health Program, established by 22 MRS Chapter 271, does have staff (toxicologists, epidemiologists, and environmental health scientists) with the requisite expertise to research and prepare a report on most of the topics specified in the bill, with one exception being the area of knowledge of greenhouse gas emissions, where the expertise of other agencies would be needed. To note, at the present time, nearly all Maine CDC staff with the requisite expertise have been fully deployed to support the State's response to PFAS contamination of farmland and well water. We currently have over a dozen separate health assessments underway as we establish standards and guidelines for PFAS in soil, irrigation water, agricultural food commodities, and fish and game impacted by soils contaminated from

the historical application of wastewater treatment plant residuals. Maine CDC anticipates staff will continue to be fully engaged in the PFAS response for at least another year and will not have the capacity to undertake research and reporting requirements within LD 2077, requiring additional funding to contract with an outside environmental consulting firm to prepare the requested report under the oversight provided by the Department.

Maine CDC has performed a cursory search for published reports on the topics outlined in LD 2077 and identified a 2022 report by the Oregon Multnomah County Health Department entitled “A Review of the Evidence Public Health and Gas Stoves.” A copy of the report accompanies our written testimony. It is offered without further comment at this time, but as a possible report model for the Committee’s consideration. Our cursory search also identified scientific studies published after the Multnomah report including those looking at the presence of chemicals in unburned gas samples analyzed for hazardous air pollutants.¹

Maine CDC appreciates the public health questions being raised by LD 2077 and has provided considerations for the programmatic impact of this bill, if enacted. The Maine CDC scientists are prioritizing PFAS work presently, and additional resources would be needed to accomplish the report on indoor air quality and health impacts of fossil fuel combustion and leakage.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,



Nancy Beardsley
Deputy Director
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Maine Department of Health and Human Services

¹ “Home is Where the Pipeline Ends: Characterization of Volatile Organic Compounds Present in Natural Gas at the Point of the Residential End User” by D.R. Michanowicz et al., published in the journal Environmental Science and Technology, Volume 56 (14) 2022.