

September 21, 2022

Chair Tony Doan
Washington State Building Code Council
1500 Jefferson St SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Chair Doan and Members of the State Building Code Council:

The 46th LD Democrats is writing today to strongly urge the State Building Code Council (SBCC) to **vote in support of the full package of residential energy code proposals that are out for public comment. In particular, we strongly support the requirements for heat pump systems in new homes and stricter ventilation for gas stoves to protect indoor air quality and health.**

As the climate crisis progresses, its impacts are increasingly felt here in Washington especially by the most vulnerable of our citizens. In the past year alone, we have seen the direct impacts of climate change in the shape of unprecedented wildfires, droughts, and heat waves which have cost hundreds of lives and have had untold economic impacts across the state. In the face of the climate emergency, it is critical that officials at all levels of government pass the policies needed to reduce emissions, protect our communities from further harm, and foster resilience. **This package of proposals takes steps to address both the efficiency and the use of fossil fuels in our newest homes, which, once built, will be around for decades.**

Homes and buildings are one of the largest and fastest-growing sources of climate pollution in Washington with this increase largely attributable to use of fossil fuel in heating space and water. Cities and counties across Washington are ready to move towards all-electric homes but cannot address new homes without state approving the residential energy code. These proposed codes are one of the steps needs to local and state climate goals. By statute, Washington's energy code is required to become increasingly more efficient every revision cycle so that new buildings in 2031 are 70% more efficient than those built in 2006. These proposed codes provide the opportunity to reduce emissions now by transitioning off of polluting fracked gas to high efficiency heat pumps that run on clean, renewable electricity. **Because there are only four code cycles between now and the 2031 code, it is essential that each revision maximizes what can be done to make buildings more efficient and transition away from fossil fuels.**

Affordable housing is crucial to helping low-income residents adapt to the climate crisis - and those residents deserve homes that will protect their health and safety from air and climate pollution. Low-income residents and other underserved communities are disproportionately impacted by the health impacts of gas – Black, Latinx, Asian, and low-income communities have higher risks of death from particle pollution. Many low-income households in the Pacific Northwest cannot afford air conditioning to cope with heat-related health impacts, or to adequately cool their homes while they are shut inside due to wildfire smoke. In addition, constructing efficient and quality buildings means lower energy bills for tenants and residents. If we don't help create opportunities for low-income customers to move off fossil fuels now, they will be left holding the bill for any stranded infrastructure down the line since they cannot afford the costlier solution of retrofitting c to move off the gas system that wealthier residents have and will chose. **These proposed codes will help the most vulnerable of our citizens be healthier and have lower bills in the most cost effective approach, as part of new construction not as a retrofit.**

We urge the SBCC to vote in favor of the full package of proposed residential code amendments, including heat pump proposals. There are so many more ways this makes sense and is critical. The time to act is now for our health, economy, environment, citizens and our children.

Sincerely,

46th LD Democrats