

**COMMENTS OF
NORTHEAST GAS ASSOCIATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
“PROHIBITION OF NATURAL GAS INFRASTRUCTURE
IN NEW BUILDINGS”**

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE
CAMBRIDGE, MA**

December 11, 2019

Good afternoon and thanks for the opportunity to provide comments.

My name is Stephen Leahy and I am with the Northeast Gas Association (NGA). NGA is a trade association based in Needham, representing natural gas interests in nine northeast states focusing on education, training and qualification and research. I want to express opposition to the proposed Ordinance, which we think would directly impact consumer choice and energy affordability for Cambridge residents.

As quick background: the natural gas distribution companies in the Commonwealth, which we represent, deliver natural gas to about 1.6 million customers every day.

Natural gas demand in the Commonwealth has continued to rise, with more than 200,000 new residential customers added in the last fifteen years. Today, more than half of all Massachusetts homeowners use natural gas. Consumers in Massachusetts have continued to choose natural gas.

I recognize the intent of this ordinance to accelerate the electrification of the economy in light of climate change. The transition to clean energy is underway. However, I would respectfully request that the city consider some drawbacks to this immediate proposed switch as presented in this ordinance.

First, the proposed effective date of January 1, 2020 for this ordinance is only three weeks away. That seems really abrupt and a disservice to homeowners and businesses planning investments and renovations.

Gas is the most affordable energy source for heating. MA DOER statistics, and U.S. EIA statistics, both demonstrate clearly that natural gas is the least expensive energy option – far less than heating oil, propane and electricity.

For residents of Cambridge on a fixed income or low income, natural gas is a truly beneficial heating option. For businesses managing budgets, natural gas is a helpful prime energy source. Cambridge residents deserve to be able to continue to choose this highly affordable energy option.

We would also note that when it comes to promoting energy efficiency and conservation, Massachusetts natural gas utilities are national leaders. Our state accounts for less than 2% (1.6%) of all natural gas deliveries in the U.S. by volume, but we invest 18% of all gas efficiency program dollars in the nation. Massachusetts invests well above its weight in gas efficiency, which serves to manage demand.

While the customer growth on the natural gas system has been occurring, methane emissions attributed to natural gas systems have continues to go down - down by 67% over the last 25 years, according to MA DEP. This is real progress. Furthermore, Massachusetts according to state officials is on track to meet its legal requirement for carbon reductions by 2020 as mandated by the GWSA. Natural gas, by offsetting other fuels in power generation and home heating over the last decade and more, has been a key part of this progress.

Finally, we think it's not helpful to restrict Cambridge residents from choosing natural gas as an energy source. I recognize that your city's public policy may lead you to want to incentivize citizens to a certain energy path – such as an all-electric house. We think it's better for everyone however if Cambridge focuses on incentivizing the energy sources you want to see used more broadly, rather than restricting and forbidding homeowners and businesses of the right to choose when it comes to energy and managing their own budgets.

The industry shares the City's goal of reducing carbon emissions, and many of our members are actively working with their communities on energy efficiency measures, aggressive pipe replacement initiatives and other technologies and measures that help to reduce CO2 emissions.

The issue with the City's current proposal is that it goes too far, too fast, without pausing to truly assess the adverse impacts it would have on residential customers—particularly those on low or fixed incomes—on businesses relying on natural gas for heating, cooking and manufacturing - and on the thousands of workers who are part of the natural gas industry, be they plumbing and HVAC contractors, utility workers and others. Instead of rushing to pass a measure that would negatively impact so many so quickly and unnecessarily, NGA believes further study, input and collaboration with all parties is essential.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these remarks.