



## NEW ENGLAND GAS WORKERS ALLIANCE

100 MEDWAY ROAD #403, MILFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01757

---

May 17, 2022

Representative Jeffrey Roy  
State House, Room 43  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael Barrett  
State House, Room 109-D  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Tackey Chan  
State House, Room 42  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Cindy Creem  
State House, Room 312A  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Brad Jones  
State House, Room 124  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Bruce Tarr  
State House, Room 308  
Boston, MA 02133

We write regarding the conference committee of H. 4515 An Act Advancing Offshore Wind and Clean Energy and S. 2842 *An Act Driving Climate Policy Forward*. The New England Gas Workers Alliance (NEGWA) is an umbrella organization for local unions representing thousands of skilled gas workers across Massachusetts.

NEGWA has advocated for increased oversight of the natural gas industry, worker protections and safety measures that will not only result in safety on the job but will also better safeguard the environment. NEGWA recognizes the need to address climate change and increase renewable energy sources in an affordable and equitable manner. However, natural gas will continue to be an important and necessary resource and NEGWA and its members strongly believe that the Commonwealth should continue to invest in this resource and not adopt policies that will encourage a disinvestment in the system.

Union gas workers have worked for generations to keep the residents of the Commonwealth safe and warm. We urge the Legislature to more carefully consider the industry's workforce as caretakers of this critical infrastructure and a skilled resource for future technologies. **Currently, there are no protections, measures or plans in place to ensure that our qualified workers will continue to maintain this infrastructure moving forward.** We urge this committee to take this important matter into account during your deliberations.

**We respectfully request that you do not include Section 65 of the Senate bill in your final conference committee report.**

Earlier this session, the Legislature enacted sweeping climate change legislation that will have a profound impact on energy policy for decades to come. As you know, the Baker Administration is now in the process of developing a new set of building codes to encourage energy efficiency and utilization of new technologies. This process has been conducted with input from a diverse

---

array of stakeholders to develop standards in the interest of all Massachusetts residents. The Senate bill creates a demonstration of natural gas bans in 10 select communities which would usurp that process underway and create a confusing, two-tier approach to energy policy.

Our natural gas infrastructure is critical for our economy as it will continue to heat the homes of families and businesses in Massachusetts for decades to come. Banning connections limits the future use of our system for new technologies being developed that may rely on the adaptation of this infrastructure. We believe that the natural gas ban demonstration would also drive-up building costs, limit the construction of affordable housing, and contribute to rate increases for working families. They are also a potential job killer for construction workers and for gas workers.

Additionally, as a matter of equity, many of the communities that have been aggressively advocating for the adoption of natural gas bans are the same affluent towns that have historically limited the development of affordable housing within their own borders. With the adoption of a natural gas bans in these communities, the increased cost to build affordable housing will ensure that these communities will continue to thwart development while other cities and towns do their part. The natural gas bans in the Senate bill helps create a back door moratorium on affordable housing.

**Please do not include Section 59 of the Senate Bill.**

DPU Docket 20-80 “the Future of Gas” is exploring how our existing assets can contribute to our clean energy future. This section would create an adjudicatory process that would short circuit the efforts already underway. Our existing natural gas infrastructure is valuable and will be utilized in the future as we continue to improve its efficiency. Due to our region’s cold climate, Massachusetts needs to keep its options open so that when affordable heating technologies emerge such as renewable natural gas, hydrogen, or other technologies in production they can be easily deployed.

**Please do not include Section 60 of the Senate Bill.**

This section takes the first step towards limiting the Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP) program that has been responsible for significant safety upgrades to our natural gas infrastructure. The membership commission is weighted against the GSEP program and its outcomes are clearly pre-determined. Radical efforts to limit this program in order to rush the Commonwealth towards renewable sources will not only have a disruptive effect on this sector, but it is also simply dangerous. GSEP helps to replace leak prone pipes that could pose a risk to the general public. Natural gas will remain an important energy source for many years to come, undermining pipeline safety to underscore policy positions will have real life consequences.

**Address the Existing Workforce**

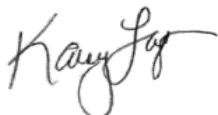
Union gas workers have worked for generations to keep the residents of the Commonwealth safe and warm. The responsibility of keeping the heat on in the millions of existing housing units in Massachusetts in our cold climate is a massive effort every winter and should not be taken for granted. As discussions continue about the future of gas, we urge the Legislature to more carefully consider the industry's workforce as caretakers of this critical infrastructure and a skilled resource for future technologies.

Our workers have received in depth training, have worked on this infrastructure for generations and through our unions, have won fair benefits and fought to make these jobs the family sustaining jobs that sustain the middle class. We want more training and to be part of the solution as alternative technologies become viable. Workers with technical background and experience in the energy sector should be the first in line. We need further protections from the Legislature to make sure that this happens, otherwise that work and the maintenance of critical infrastructure may be given to low bid contractors that have been responsible for many issues over the years.

The Commonwealth has a vested interest in keeping gas workers and their families on the forefront of our energy needs. NEGWA and gas workers across the Massachusetts stand ready to continue our shared goals of reducing our carbon footprint. Please include the attached protective language in your final conference committee report.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us if you should have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Laflash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathy" being more prominent than the last name "Laflash".

Kathy Laflash  
President  
NEGWA, Inc.  
USW Local 12003 & 12012 -National Grid employees,  
USW Local 12004 & 12026-Eversource Gas employees,  
USW Local 12325 -Berkshire Gas employees