



Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

March 15, 2022

TO: Senate Energy and Utilities Finance and Policy Committee
FROM: Andrea Lovoll, Legislative Coordinator, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
RE: SF 2185: New Natural Gas/Propane Service Ban Prohibition.

Chair Senjem and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your service to the people of Minnesota and thank you for the opportunity to testify on SF 2185 (Kiffmeyer). Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) is a nonprofit organization with almost 50 years of experience using law and science to protect Minnesota's environment and the health of its people.

MCEA opposes SF 2185, a bill that would prohibit local government units from banning new service lines for gas and propane. As cities explore a variety of options to address our climate crisis, the legislature should not be removing their authority to implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Minnesota cities should have the ability to restrict or eliminate new gas hookups to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health. All gas hookups leak methane, even when the appliance is turned off. In fact, a recent study found that 75% of the methane emissions from gas stoves happen when the appliance is off. Methane is a particularly potent greenhouse gas, and is a lead contributor to indoor air pollution.

Indoor air pollution from gas appliances leads to chronic health conditions, especially in children. It is a leading contributor to asthma, and other respiratory and circulatory conditions. These gasses can be partially mitigated by proper ventilation mechanisms, but even then, indoor air quality suffers. Additionally, homes least likely to have proper ventilation and thus the highest concentrations of methane and air pollution in their living space are typically rental homes, where residents cannot make electric upgrades to their appliances even if they want to. Those that are the most likely to suffer the consequences of indoor air pollution are people living in poverty. They may rely on a city to act on their behalf, banning gas hookups on new builds, so that they may be able to afford living somewhere that won't exacerbate or cause asthma.

Also, natural gas leaks can cause dangerous explosions and death. Tragic explosions like the one at the Minnehaha Academy in 2017 would not have happened if the facility had been built without a natural gas service line. And, defective natural gas appliances can lead to a build-up of toxic carbon monoxide in homes and buildings, causing preventable deaths.

In addition to public health and safety concerns, methane gas is more than 25 times more potent than CO2 emissions for our climate, and in order to address our methane emissions, we need to find strategies to remove our reliance on them. Rapidly decarbonizing our electricity generation, and moving to electrification will be necessary to reach our greenhouse gas reduction goals. Giving cities the flexibility to address their emissions is one key strategy, and consistent with Minnesota's long history of local control. If we want to get ourselves out of the hole, we have to stop digging—literally. Please vote no on SF 2185, for the future of electrification, for addressing the climate crisis, and for public health.

Sincerely,

Andrea Lovoll, Legislative Coordinator, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy