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March 16, 2022

Minnesota Senate  
Housing Finance and Policy Committee  
c/o Joel Hanson, Committee Administrator  
95 University Avenue W.  
Room 123 Capitol  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Re: MEEA Comments on the Energy Code Adoption Process in Minnesota**

Dear Members of the Senate Housing Finance and Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the energy code adoption process in Minnesota. The Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) is a collaborative network promoting energy efficiency to optimize energy generation, reduce consumption, create jobs and decreases carbon emissions in all Midwest Communities. MEEA has worked in Minnesota and other states to provide technical assistance and education on energy efficient building policies since 2009.

MEEA supports the regular update of statewide energy codes as a best practice for improving energy efficiency in buildings, using the International Energy Conservation Code as a baseline. Minnesota has established a 6-year code cycle, providing an opportunity to regularly update the statewide energy code to ensure the use of new construction best practices and improved energy efficiency standards for commercial and residential buildings. This cycle also provides a steady and predictable timeline for the construction industry to review and train to the new codes to ensure compliance.

Prohibiting the adoption of new energy codes would prevent Minnesotans from capitalizing on the benefits that energy efficiency can provide. Energy codes are one of the most cost-effective energy policies that can be implemented. Strong energy codes provide minimum standards that not only result in the construction of more energy efficient buildings, but also buildings that are more resilient, healthier and have lower operating costs. The most cost-effective time to implement energy efficiency features included in the energy code is during the initial construction of the building. These benefits continue beyond the payback period – they last for the lifetime of the building, which can be from 50 to 100+ years.



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Energy codes, like all other building codes, are life-safety codes that exist to protect building occupants and communities. If built to an updated code, a home will have better moisture management, extreme weather protection, indoor air quality and resilience. Energy codes require that homes are well sealed to keep pollutants out and properly ventilated to control the source of incoming air, making the home healthier and safer. Homes built to newer codes are also better able to withstand storms and maintain livable temperatures longer, which saves lives by allowing occupants to safely shelter in place.<sup>1</sup> Unlike other building codes, energy codes pay customers back by lowering the energy use and associated costs of the buildings they occupy. Limiting the ability of the state to update its energy code will negatively impact building owners for years to come and result in homes constructed to outdated practices.

In addition, the consistent adoption of energy codes is essential for the state as it strives for a cleaner energy future. Buildings make up nearly 40% of Minnesota's statewide energy use. Increasing the efficiency and reducing the energy consumption of the building sector is key to achieving 100% clean energy by 2040. Blocking the opportunity to improve building standards and the energy efficiency baseline established by the energy code would inevitably stall advancement in the building sector.

Updating the energy code is a cost-effective way to reduce the energy use of buildings. A regular adoption cycle allows for gradual and achievable energy efficiency requirements to be set and ensures the state is keeping up with construction best practices. Without updated energy codes, the economic, health and resiliency benefits that come with improving building energy efficiency would be lost.

If you have any questions about this testimony or the general impact of energy codes, please contact Nicole Westfall, Building Policy Manager for MEEA at [nwestfall@mwalliance.org](mailto:nwestfall@mwalliance.org) or 312-374-0918.

Sincerely,

Stacey Paradis  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://swenergy.org/data/sites/1/media/documents/codes/Energy-Codes-are-Life-Safety-Codes.pdf>