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February 18, 2021

The Honorable Representative Joe Seiwert
Chair, House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications

RE: Support SB 24, Prohibiting municipalities from imposing restrictions on customers' use of energy based upon source of energy.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to present our written testimony. My name is Ernest Kutzley and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP Kansas. We have more than 290,000 members in Kansas. AARP supports SB 24 to keep utility rates affordable and allow customers the right to use the fuel of their choice.

AARP supports sustainable energy policies. However, we also focus on affordability and reliability. Many of our members have low or fixed incomes. Others live only on Social Security. Still others have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These customers do not have the additional money it would take to switch to a more expensive fuel source to heat their homes.

AARP has supported similar legislation enacted last year in Arizona and Oklahoma and this session is supporting similar bills in Texas, Missouri, and Indiana.

A few municipalities across the country have enacted ordinances to limit or restrict the use of natural gas for home heating, cooking, and water heating as well as in commercial buildings, claiming that using electricity would be better for the environment. This claim is suspect—especially in the Midwest—as the new electric load would have to be served by the existing natural gas or coal fired power plants. This is a less efficient use of natural gas and is hardly better for the environment. Further, it would increase the Sunflower State's increasingly unaffordable electric rates as it could cause the need for substantial new electric generation, transmission, and distribution facilities.

(Over)

The remaining natural gas customers would be forced to pay higher gas rates since the reduced gas load would mean that the fixed costs of the gas system would have to be spread to a smaller customer base. Natural gas is currently much more affordable and plentiful than electricity. Restricting or eliminating the use of gas for residential customers would make monthly energy bills increase substantially. Further, there would be the cost of switching to all-electric service and the purchase of multiple new appliances per household. This cost could exceed \$9,000 per customer.

Requiring customers with low and moderate incomes to switch from a low cost, plentiful and domestically produced fuel such as natural gas to a much more expensive fuel such as electricity is unacceptable—especially during a pandemic.

Therefore, we respectfully request your support of SB 24.

