

To: Oregon Legislative Task Force on Resilient, Efficient Buildings.

Date: July 12, 2022

Thank you for your participation in this Task Force. This is an important step in legislative efforts to address the climate crisis.

Buildings are a major source of energy use in Oregon. Thanks to precious successful efforts in the legislature, Oregon is on track to produce all our electricity from clean renewable sources. Natural gas on the other hand is a fossil fuel that emits CO₂ when burned. While it does produce less CO₂ than coal in power plants, it is still a significant source of climate-changing emissions.

But that is only part of the problem. Natural gas is mostly methane, a powerful greenhouse gas in its own right. Studies have shown that substantial amounts of methane leak during production and transmission, negating any benefit achieved during combustion.

Natural gas is also hazardous. Most natural gas is now produced by fracking (hydraulic fracturing) since many conventional sources have been depleted. While the effects of fracking are not happening in Oregon, fracking endangers communities where it does take place.

Natural gas leaks have caused many explosions resulting in injuries, deaths, and property damage. Natural gas use in indoor furnaces and appliances brings that risk of explosion into households and businesses.

Natural gas is harmful to indoor air quality, producing carbon monoxide which can be fatal and nitrogen dioxide which can cause and exacerbate asthma and heart problems. People of color and low income people are especially vulnerable to these health impacts and natural gas increases their risks.

Technologies exist to bring this electricity into our homes and buildings for heating, cooling, cooking and operating other appliances. Combined with improved efficiency all-electric homes can offer lower energy costs.

I urge this Task Force to design equitable programs and policies to transition Oregon homes and buildings to clean renewable electricity. The climate will benefit and Oregon residents will benefit from improved health and energy costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments,
Laurie Dougherty, Co-Coordinator 350 Salem OR