

**CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
(360) 778-5010



**COUNCILMEMBERS**

Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Ben Elenbaas  
Kaylee Galloway  
Jon Scanlon  
Mark Stremler

**WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Honorable Andy Billig  
307 Legislative Building  
PO Box 40403  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Alex Ramel  
LEG 434A  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable John Braun  
314 Legislative Building  
PO Box 40420  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Deborah Lekanoff  
JLOB 422  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Laurie Jinkins  
339C Legislative Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Sharon Shewmake  
213 John A. Cherberg Building  
PO Box 40442  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Drew Stokesbary  
335C Legislative Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Alicia Rule  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Liz Lovelett  
233 John A. Cherberg Building  
PO Box 40440  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Joe Timmons  
JLOB 419  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

June 4, 2024

Dear Washington State Legislators,

The Whatcom County Council writes to express our opposition to HB 1589, which was passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Inslee earlier this year.

As you are likely aware, this legislation mandates that Puget Sound Energy (PSE) file a plan with the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to combine their natural gas and electric services.

The law faced significant controversy, including legal challenges, during the legislative session and is still the subject of substantial criticism. In Whatcom County, Representatives Alicia Rule and Joe Timmons voted against the legislation, underscoring bipartisan opposition to the new mandates. The average homeowner simply cannot afford an expensive retrofit away from natural gas.

Housing affordability is an important priority for the state and Whatcom County. While the Legislature has taken steps to reduce housing costs, especially in the past two years, HB 1589 undermines this progress and will increase the cost of housing for those who can least afford it. Worse, the bill protects the state's largest utility company from significant carbon reduction compliance costs by requiring ratepayers to foot the bill. Local restaurants, businesses, renters,

and homeowners will face significantly higher costs while they still recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic and wrestle with inflation.

The Whatcom County Council urges the Washington State Legislature to revise state law regarding transitioning from natural gas to electric utilities during the next legislative session. We hope you understand our concerns and work to address the problems in HB 1589. Please affirm the importance of clean energy choice for consumers while we balance affordability with carbon reduction goals. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service on behalf of our State and county.

Sincerely,

Barry Buchanan, Chair  
Whatcom County Council

Cc: Correspondence File  
AB2024-329