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The Honorable Joe Timmons
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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
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