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House Bill 1234 Testimony in **Support**

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Representative Porter, Chair

January 27, 2023

Chairman Porter, members of the committee, I am Carlee McLeod, president of the Utility Shareholders of North Dakota, here on behalf of USND utility members, including ALLETE, Montana-Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power, and Xcel Energy. We ask you to support HB 1234 and the amendments offered today by the bill sponsor.

There is a growing movement across the country by which political subdivisions use ordinances or other policies to prohibit the use of natural gas. The bans vary by area and generally target the use of natural gas in residences or businesses. Some target certain classifications of buildings, some others target new construction, while others restrict new natural gas extensions in communities. One common tactic is to use modifications to local building and energy codes that have the effect of banning natural gas.

This bill and its companion bill HB 1124 protect the right of individuals and businesses to choose which energy source works best for them. Twenty states have approved such legislation, with more states working through the legislative process currently. There are various benefits to natural gas as a fuel source. For example, natural gas is a more economic fuel choice over all-electric service.

Natural gas plays a central role in economic development, and there is a strong desire of unserved and underserved communities to gain natural gas service. Passing this legislation would provide certainty to individuals, businesses, and industries that rely on continued use of natural gas, those who are working to locate to places where natural gas service is available, and those communities seeking to gain service. Without that certainty, new businesses may choose to locate in states where natural gas use is protected.

We ask for your support of House Bill 1234 for the certainty and protection it provides to citizens who choose natural gas.

Thank you.

