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Senate Bill 2366 Testimony in **Support**

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Representative Porter, Chair

March 9, 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 SB 2366.

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. Natural gas service is one of the biggest determinative factors in whether a community survives and grows. Industries look to the availability of natural gas when deciding where to locate new facilities. When a community does not have natural gas service, it loses new industry to communities that do have natural gas service. Thus, small communities without natural gas stagnate and shrink in population and commerce opportunities while communities with natural gas service grow. Over the past decade or more, your gas-serving investor-owned utilities have worked to bring natural gas to more small communities, but there are significant barriers resulting in slow and halted attempts at expansion. Passing and adopting this study for the 2023-2024 interim would help the legislature to better understand the issues specific to small communities, which is the best way to develop effective solutions.

We ask for your support of Senate Bill 2366.

Thank you.

