

**Testimony in Support of
Engrossed HB 1234
Senate Industry and Business
March 8, 2023**

Good morning, Chairman Larsen, Members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee, my name is Deb Birgen. I serve as the Director of Legislative and Government Relations for Missouri River Energy Services (MRES). I would like to thank the Chairman and the committee members for allowing me to submit my testimony in writing. I am submitting this testimony through our MRES lobbyist, Todd D. Kranda (#58), who is an attorney with the Kelsch Ruff Kranda Nagle & Ludwig Law Firm in Mandan.

I am testifying on behalf of MRES which is a municipal power agency that provides wholesale electricity and other services to six member communities and one associate municipal electric member in this state, including Cavalier, Hillsboro, Lakota, Maddock, Northwood, Riverdale and Valley City. MRES appears before you today to voice support for Engrossed HB 1234.

As many of you know, some states and cities have banned the interconnection on natural gas in new housing and construction. Likewise, there is an on-going discussion to discontinue the sale on natural gas fueled appliances like natural gas stoves, water heaters, boilers, and other equipment. HB 1234 would prohibit local government units, including cities from imposing a ban on interconnection natural gas, as well as other fuel sources. MRES supports HB 1234.

First, let me state that MRES is aware that this is a ban on a local government unit taking an action. As a municipal power agency representing municipal electric utilities,

MRES generally supports local control. In particular, MRES believes that the customer-owners of a municipal utility should be in control of the future of their municipal-owned utility, the policies that govern it, and how the utility is operated. However, as supporters of an all-of-the above resource portfolio for electric utilities, MRES supports HB 1234 as it continues to promote an all-of-the above perspective when it comes to resource and fuel use.

Banning natural gas, or banning any specific fuel, would not only negatively impact local business, customers, and communities; it also threatens to take away the right of the people to choose their energy. As the country looks to electrify the grid, natural gas is still needed for reliable energy and to make up for the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources that are being interconnected. Likewise, in the home, in businesses, and in other aspects of life, customers should continue to be given a choice of the type of appliances and the fuel used to operate them in their homes and businesses. What is the best fuel choice or the choice that offers the most benefits or efficiencies for a consumer will differ based on the type of equipment, the amount used, supply chains, market pricing, and other factors.

Therefore, I would urge a **DO PASS** recommendation for **Engrossed HB 1234**.