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Business, Labor and Consumer Voices Urge Energy Conferees to Reject Billions in Costly Senate Provisions

Coalition analysis finds Senate legislation will raise utility bills by another $800-$1,000 per year and end consumer choices

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Coalition for Sustainable Energy (MCSE) today urged members of the energy conference committee and legislative leaders to reject sweeping and costly Senate provisions that end consumers' right to choose natural gas heat and add as much as $27 billion to energy bills paid by Massachusetts families and businesses by 2035.

Unlike the bills filed by the Governor and passed by the House, the Senate bill would advance a sweeping electrification agenda, grant state officials broad new spending authority and allow state regulators to dictate energy choices for consumers who rely on energy sources such as natural gas.

"Unfortunately, the Senate did not pass an affordability bill," said Bill Ryan, lead organizer for the coalition. "After last winter, Massachusetts families and businesses were promised relief from high energy costs. We need to pursue the Governor's "all-of-the-above" energy strategy instead of doubling down on the Senate's costly anti-consumer choice approach. The Senate took an agenda developed by a very narrow circle of climate advocates—detached from the lives of ordinary families and businesses—and wrote that agenda into a bill that will add tens of billions of dollars more to ratepayer bills in the years ahead."

The MCSE analysis of the Senate bill, based on utility industry data, estimates that its provisions could impose $20 billion to $27 billion in new costs by 2035, equivalent to an annual impact of approximately $800 to $1,050 for a typical residential ratepayer. Combined total new costs to existing natural gas ratepayers could approach $230 billion by 2040, inclusive of new home heating, cooking, water heating and clothes drying appliances.

"Rather than addressing economic reality, the Senate bill asks ratepayers to underwrite a radical electrification agenda without meaningful limits on its cost," said Ryan. "That is an extreme departure from the far more practical approaches advanced in conversations happening around the country."

The Senate bill would also give the Department of Energy Resources (DoER) broad authority to procure any renewable energy in whatever quantities and over whatever periods of time DoER determines with the resulting charges borne by ratepayers. The Senate fails to propose reasonable, adequate aggregate spending caps, limits on residential bill impacts or robust independent public review of those costs.

“Main street businesses are faced with deciding every day whether they can afford to locate, grow and stay in Massachusetts,” said Jon Hurst, president of the Retailers Association of Massachusetts. “The Senate’s blank-check electrification agenda would make it more expensive to run a store, hire people and serve customers. It is far outside the affordability mainstream.”

The Senate proposal would also allow state regulators to terminate existing natural gas service without a customer’s affirmative consent. MCSE warned that moving away from the gas system without a safe, reliable and affordable replacement could reduce customer choice while creating new risks for workers and communities. Any realistic transition must also recognize utilities’ continuing obligation to serve customers and the need for Gas System Enhancement Program investments that replace aging infrastructure and maintain the safety and reliability of the gas system.

“Dismantling critical energy infrastructure before a safe, reliable and affordable replacement even exists is a terrible idea,” said Harry Brett international representative for the United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters and Sprinkler-fitters of Massachusetts. “Reliability and safety are not abstract policy questions. They affect workers, families and communities every day. The Senate bill puts people’s economic well-being, jobs and safety at risk.”

MCSE said the Senate’s approach is ideologically driven and detached from the practical concerns dominating kitchen-table and workplace conversations across Massachusetts. Its expansive mandates and open-ended authorities would shift costs and risks onto people who have little ability to absorb them.

“No bill is better than one that raises costs for businesses and families.” said Marie Oliva, President & CEO of the Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce. “Ratepayers are already paying some of the highest electricity prices in the country.”

The MCSE is asking conferees and legislative leaders to reject the Senate bill’s electrification mandates and open-ended spending authorities by including all four of the following protections in any final legislation:

1. An independent, publicly reviewable affordability or net-cost test before major new obligations are approved.
2. Hard aggregate spending controls and residential bill-impact limits for new ratepayer-funded procurement authority.

3. Protect a consumer’s right to choose natural gas energy service.
4. Reliability, safety and workforce protections preserved in any transition framework.

Throughout the conference process, MCSE will make the voices of businesses, labor unions and consumers heard loud and clear by conferees. The fall campaign will include the publication of its cost analysis, direct outreach to conferees and legislative leaders, statewide and district-level digital advocacy, opinion pieces, regional media engagement and rapid responses to developments in the negotiations.

“Massachusetts businesses and families deserve accountability, not a blank check funded through their utility bills.” said Chris Carlozzi, Massachusetts State Director of NFIB. “If the conference committee cannot produce a bill that meaningfully lowers costs and protects consumers, it should table any energy legislation until next session.”

About the Massachusetts Coalition for Sustainable Energy

Representing nearly two dozen of the Commonwealth's largest business, employer, housing, labor, Chamber, and trade associations, the Massachusetts Coalition for Sustainable Energy believes climate change is real and that the Commonwealth must lead on this issue. We share the goal of providing sustainable energy to the Commonwealth, protecting our environment, and keeping our economy strong. We also believe in a Massachusetts energy future that puts us on a responsible path to net zero by 2050 – and that we must address climate change with a data-driven, science-based approach that balances the demand for clean energy with the realities of increasing demand.