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## **Legislature Looks to Cut Pollution from Buildings Local Cities and Communities Also Move Towards Electrifying Building Sector**

*Olympia, WA* [Buildings](#) are the fastest-growing source of carbon pollution in Washington State, mostly due to the emissions from burning gas that is fracked and transported thousands of miles to reach us, in furnaces, water heaters and other “natural” gas appliances. Switching from burning gas to using clean and low-cost efficient electricity in homes and other buildings reduces air pollution that disproportionately harms BIPOC communities and exacerbates their risk of COVID-19 and other air pollution-related illnesses and premature deaths.

The Washington Legislature is developing policy solutions for an orderly, equitable transition away from fracked gas to power the building sector. During the current legislative session, Governor Inslee, Rep. Ramel and Senator Liias have put forward proposals to position Washington State as a leader in building electrification with the Healthy Homes, Clean Buildings legislation ([HB 1084](#) and [SB 5093](#)).

“Buildings cause more premature deaths than air pollution from any other sector, including industry and transportation,” said Chris Covert-Bowlds, M.D., a practicing family physician and a member of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility. “Indoor gas use harms long term health, so we need to switch from gas-based appliances. Children who grow up in homes with gas stoves have a forty-two percent higher chance of developing asthma symptoms. This bill will protect all Washingtonians, but especially children and others who are vulnerable to indoor air pollution.”

**The House Environment and Energy Committee heard more about the policy and benefits**, which would require that any new building constructed in 2030 or after be zero carbon, with no gas used for space and water heating in new construction after 2027. It also strengthens state building codes to incentivize cleaner, safer electric appliances over gas, among other programs and requirements to help the state transition off gas in the building sector.

Michael Furze, a representative of Governor Inslee’s office (WA. Dept. of Commerce) [testified in support](#) of the Healthy Homes and Clean Buildings Act, saying “our states statutory greenhouse gas reduction limits are aligned with science, meeting them requires us to take urgent action to adopt policies that drive emissions reduction and establish a sustained coordinated, comprehensive, and equity focused effort, across state government to ensure we get the job done. In order to achieve those targets we must address inefficiency and fossil fuels consumed in our built environment.”

Local communities are joining other cities and counties on the West Coast in not waiting for state action. The City of Bellingham made commitments to use 100% renewable energy by 2035. Their public works department staff are in the process of assessing rules for new buildings with a Triple Bottom Line + Technology (TBL+) analysis, hopefully with a draft ordinance proposed in early 2021. Seattle is currently updating its commercial and multi-family building [energy codes](#) to eliminate most fossil fuel uses and

prioritize high-efficiency building envelopes, securing energy and cost savings and public health benefits.

“We support the Healthy Homes, Clean Buildings legislation that steers us away from preferences for the use of fracked gas in our buildings and towards the use of clean renewable electricity,” said Steve Gelb, local director of Emerald Cities Collaborative - Seattle and the Shift Zero - Zero Carbon Building Electrification Task Force. “This transition needs to be just and equitable by assisting low- and moderate-income homeowners with residential electrification and planning the workforce transition from fossil fuels to clean energy.”

“In 2018, Washington committed to transitioning off of fossil fuels in the electric sector, and now it’s time we begin transitioning to clean sources of energy to heat our homes and buildings,” said Kelly Hall, senior policy manager for Climate Solutions. “House Bill 1084 is smart policy that will protect our climate, health, and the safety of our communities, while giving utilities an opportunity to lead the transition.”

Many other experts and community leaders testified in support of the policy including, Front & Centered, the City of Bellingham, City of Seattle, and Seattle City Light. Every major study on decarbonization — including the ones put out by [Governor Inslee’s](#) office, [President Obama’s](#) office, and the [United Nations](#) — calls for a phase out of gas, and states like [Massachusetts, New York and California](#) have already begun looking at how to move to more clean buildings.

[Watch Archive of Hearing – TVW, Washington States' Public Affairs Network](#)

**A journalist's guide to building electrification [here](#). Fact sheet on HB 1084/SB 5093 [here](#).**

**VISUALS:** Photos showing building electrification are available upon request.

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