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**To: Assembly Committee on Energy & Utilities
Senate Committee on Utilities & Technology**

**From: Bill Skewes, Executive Director
Wisconsin Utilities Association, Inc.**

Re: Support for AB 45/SB 49 - Energy Freedom Legislation

Date: May 16, 2023

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Bill Skewes and I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Utilities Association, representing Wisconsin's investor-owned gas and electric energy providers. Joining me today is Dan Lapato, Associate VP of State Affairs for the American Gas Association.

WUA members provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity and natural gas services to approximately 80% of Wisconsin's energy customers. Our members serve 2,512,749 Electric Customers and 2,000,518 Natural Gas Customers across Wisconsin. We employ 8,420 Wisconsinites. WUA members pay about \$214 million in Gross Receipts and Property Taxes and hold Assets totaling approximately \$42 Billion. Our members contribute \$25 million annually to charity and provide Energy assistance of over \$91 million.

All major generating members of the WUA have carbon reduction goals averaging 73% by 2030 and all are planning net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

We are here to express our members' support for the energy freedom bills, AB 45 and its Senate companion, SB 49 which *"prohibits a state agency, city, village, town, or county from discriminating against a public utility, an electric cooperative, or a liquified petroleum gas retailer, as defined in the bill, based in whole or in part on the nature or source of the service to be provided to a consumer"*.

We thank the authors for bringing it forward and the chairs for holding hearings on this important legislation.

Dan will speak to the benefits of using natural gas as a safe, reliable and affordable fuel for home heating, cooking and electric power generation. Which it is.

Yet, WUA's chief concern is the need to preserve the ability of the Legislature of the state of Wisconsin to set energy policy. It is inappropriate to concede the field of such a broadly used and essential resource as energy to 72 counties, 1,253 towns, 190 cities, and 411

villages, which would inevitably create a significant patchwork of varying laws between jurisdictions.

In everything from transmission and power plant siting, solar farms and yes, fuel choice, it is the state's purview, indeed, responsibility, to set energy policy, beginning with the Legislature and implemented by the PSC.

While certain jurisdictions in other states, such as Berkley, CA in 2019 – struck down by the US Court of Appeals last month - and most recently New York State have acted to ban Natural Gas in new construction, 24 other states have proactively passed laws to prevent local governments from banning NG connections. Wisconsin should be one of those states.

Dan will review some of this information with you in his testimony.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share the views of our industry with you. We respectfully urge you to support these bills and I will turn it over to Dan Lapato of the American Gas Association.