

# Cora Weissbourd Testimony to Senate Committee on Global Warming and the Environment

April 4, 2022

Thank you for having me today to testify at this hearing. It is an honor to be here, and I am so grateful that you are taking time to hear concerns about the DPU 20-80 “Future of Gas” proceeding.

My name is Cora Weissbourd, I am a volunteer with Mothers Out Front and a constituent of Senator Creem’s in Brookline. Thank you especially to Senator Creem for your extraordinary leadership on these issues.

I’ve participated in the 20-80 proceeding since January of 2021. Over the past year, I’ve watched this process unfold with increasing frustration and fear.

This is my first time testifying for anything and I am here to ask you to be heroes for my little kids and for all of us. We need legislative action to stop the DPU from rubber stamping these dangerous plans from our gas companies.

This morning, you are going to hear from experts in electrification, decarbonization, alternative fuels, and gas system transitions. I’ve been in meetings with many of these experts for over a year now and I know how brilliant and committed they are.

I would like to set the stage with the future that is possible and describe how far this future is from the gas companies’ plans before the DPU.

Our future is electric. For safe, sustainable heat and air conditioning our buildings need heat pumps. Heat pumps are modern technology, already used in Massachusetts and all over the world, and a key part of our sustainable global future.

A clean heat path for our gas companies could be installing networked geothermal communities for a utility scale, all-electric solution. The Future of Heat bill would enable this solution and others. As you’ll hear this morning, electrification is the most feasible and affordable solution for most buildings. We can still choose to pursue this future in a just and equitable way.

Electricity is not the future that the gas companies are interested in.

The “Future of Gas” proceeding has been broken from the moment the DPU put the gas utilities in charge. From that moment, our gas companies had free reign to produce plans that prioritized keeping themselves in business.

I’ll give a quick summary of what the gas companies are proposing and why it’s so problematic:

To stay in business with their current model, our gas companies need a future where they get to keep making money off investing in pipelines. They need gas to work to make that profit system work.

Unfortunately, natural gas is a fossil fuel. So now they have plans insisting that renewable natural gas and hydrogen will save us.

Renewable natural gas is just rebranded methane. A potent greenhouse gas. RNG is sourced from different places than natural gas – which makes it scarce and more expensive. But it’s still just methane so it still causes climate change.

Renewable natural gas is not a serious climate solution. RNG is a scarce resource that has been proven not to scale efficiently. It’s also not a zero emissions fuel, as it was treated in the modeling.

Hydrogen actually has many important uses in a net zero future. But it is incredibly explosive and so it isn’t safe to use in our ancient gas pipes.

In the coming months, you will hear a lot from the gas companies about pursuing “all-of-the-above” solutions. In practice, “all of the above” means they want regulatory permission to dabble in everything - especially dead ends like RNG – and fritter away every dollar and every minute that they can maintaining the status quo.

The gas companies are asking the DPU for permission to charge new fees and tariffs for RNG and hydrogen. To charge customers to leave the gas system. To spend billions upon billions on pipelines that we’ll need to abandon.

We’re in a climate emergency. Please make our gas companies stop wasting our time and money. We can’t afford to mess around with “all-of-the-above”. It’s time to pick winners.

The gas companies’ plans to dabble and delay will cost as much or more as a true system transformation and they won’t actually solve our climate problems.

Every day that we don't act to solve this problem we put even more cost burden and climate burden on the next generation and on the people who can least afford it.

To conclude, I will repeat my plea: please stop indulging the charade that our gas companies are acting in our best interest. I need someone looking out for my kids. We're one of a handful of states undertaking this kind of proceeding. This is our opportunity to demonstrate the well-planned, equitable transition and sustainable future that is possible.

Thank you.