



SB23-291 Utility Regulation

Thursday, April 20 2023

Senate Finance

Testimony: Oppose

Mr. Chair and fellow committee members,

My name is Raymond H. Gonzales, and I am the president of the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and executive vice president of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce.

The Metro Denver EDC represents nine counties and around 70 communities that contribute to our robust economy and incredible Colorado culture.

I'm here today to express our organizations' opposition to SB23-291.

I'm proud to say that after three generations of my family living in Adams County, there are very few who have experienced the vibrancy and growth I enjoy in my community today.

I have more than 25 years of senior level experience encompassing private sector expertise and nearly every level of government administration.

Prior to my role with Metro Denver EDC, I served as the county manager of Adams County.

I saw firsthand the need for reliable, efficient, and affordable energy infrastructure as I worked with our board of county commissioners to bring new jobs and new businesses to Adams County.

Under my tenure, the county ranked #1 in the nation in job growth out of 355 of the largest U.S. counties from June 2018 to June 2019.

Between the years of 2020 through 2022 Xcel Energy invested nearly \$118M in reinforcement, upgrades, and new pipelines to serve the growing population. It would be impossible to have the citizens of Adams County be responsible for this cost alone.

Here is what I can tell you based on my current role and previous experience: If you want to hinder the growth of Colorado's economy – I encourage you to pass this bill.

Key investments in Colorado's energy infrastructure will come to a crawl – and our joint vision of making Colorado a leader in the clean energy transition will slowly dissipate.

Energy investment comes from incentives, collaboration, good stakeholding, and pragmatic negotiation. It does NOT come from divisive, political endeavors that increase bureaucracy and create enormous burdens on businesses that are essential to our communities and our state.

This bill is a Christmas tree of ill designed policies drafted behind closed doors that are response to a national period of high natural gas prices that stemmed from severe cold weather, inflation, international conflicts, and the cost of oil.

Sadly, this proposal does nothing to stabilize, protect, help, or reduce costs for customers.

But it does increase two things: red tape and hypocrisy.

The measure prohibits Xcel Energy from passing along specified costs related to its customers - such as tax penalties, fines, expenses related to investor relations, advertising and public relations expenses, lobbying

expenses, and other types of political relations endeavors. It implies that Xcel Energy passes all these costs onto customers today.

That is simply not accurate.

Let me ask this: are the people of Colorado not the customers of our government? Don't state departments and the governor's office pay for legislative liaisons who act as lobbyists? Doesn't the state work with outside entities on referred measures or campaigns?

It only seems fair that the government should comply with the same standards as being proposed in this bill – since our residents' hard-earned tax money is paying for all these efforts.

Your colleagues held a series of hearings masked by saving customers money, but in the end, it was a vehicle to advance a special agenda of a very few.

This bill does nothing to help the people of Colorado with their utility bills. This bill does not drive outcomes that are consistent with the State of Colorado's policy goals and clean energy agenda.

Rather than furthering the aggressive and achievable sector-specific emissions reduction goals of the state – this will lead to serious disinvestment in our local economies and communities.

We encourage the committee to vote no on this legislation.