



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
GENERAL COURT

August 12, 2022

Department of Energy Resources
100 Cambridge St, Suite 1020
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Building Code Comments

Dear Commissioner Woodcock, Secretary Card, and Secretary Kennealy,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the updated stretch code and new specialized stretch code. We are the lead House and Senate sponsors of the Solar Neighborhoods Act (H.3278, S.2165), a bill to require rooftop solar on new residential and commercial construction. Each of us has also introduced and supported other bills to reduce the use of fossil fuels in our buildings and transition to renewable sources of energy, and we were proud to support the provision in the 2021 climate law directing the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to develop the specialized stretch code.

We appreciate DOER's efforts to strengthen green building requirements in municipalities that choose to opt into either the stretch code or the specialized stretch code. The current proposal would take significant steps forward relative to our current building codes. In particular, the stronger HERS score requirements will help ensure that new buildings are built with well-insulated walls and windows and efficient appliances. More efficient buildings will reduce the total amount of energy used in Massachusetts, helping to bring a future powered by 100% renewable energy within reach.

At the same time, we believe there are two areas where the proposed specialized stretch code can be strengthened further. We urge DOER to make the following changes to the specialized stretch code:

Require rooftop solar on all new buildings where feasible

The proposed specialized stretch code would require rooftop solar only on buildings that use fossil fuels for heating or appliances. This requirement should be extended to all buildings with suitable rooftop or on-site solar potential.

Solar energy is one of our best renewable energy resources in Massachusetts. According to [Solar Homes](#), a report from the Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center, requiring rooftop solar panels on all new homes would increase Massachusetts' solar generation capacity by more than 2,300 megawatts by 2045.

Requiring rooftop solar on new buildings has several advantages. First, it is often cheaper to install solar at the time of construction rather than add the solar panels at a later date. Second, generating more renewable energy in our communities, close to where electricity is used, can increase resiliency and reduce the need to invest in expensive transmission infrastructure. And finally, meeting more of Massachusetts' electricity needs with rooftop solar will reduce the impacts of renewable energy development on open spaces and ecosystems.

Require fossil-fuel-free construction

Achieving Massachusetts' climate goals will require a rapid reduction in the use of oil and gas in our buildings. The use of fossil fuels in buildings, particularly for cooking, is also linked to indoor air pollution and negative health impacts. Every new building that uses fossil fuels for heating, hot water, or cooking will eventually need to be retrofitted with efficient electric technologies like heat pumps.

The current draft of the specialized stretch code includes a "mixed-fuel pathway," allowing the construction of residential and commercial buildings that burn fossil fuels for space heating or other uses. The code should be revised to require that all new buildings be built with clean, all-electric systems, except where there is a clear demonstration that an all-electric system is not feasible at this time. Requiring new buildings to be built with all-electric systems will help state agencies and utility efficiency programs focus their resources and capacity on retrofitting Massachusetts' stock of existing buildings.

While the climate bill recently signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker will allow up to ten cities and towns to require fossil-fuel-free new construction, a specialized stretch code with a clear all-electric requirement would expand that opportunity to other communities. Ultimately, to protect our health and ensure a safe climate, we must transition all of our buildings off of fossil fuels, and the specialized stretch code could be a critical tool to achieve that goal.

Thank you for your work in strengthening Massachusetts' building codes. We appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Jack Lewis
State Representative
7th Middlesex District



Jamie Eldridge
State Senator
Middlesex and Worcester District



Mike Connolly
State Representative
26th Middlesex District