

February 23, 2016

RE: H2870 "An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for leaked gas" and H2871 "An Act relative to gas leak repairs during road projects."

Dear Representative Rushing / Livingstone:

The Board of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay respectfully urges you to contact Representative Thomas Golden, the House chairman of the Telecom, Utilities and Energy Committee, and urge him to report out Representative Lori Ehrlich's two **gas leak bills** favorably by March 15.

Gas leaks are a major concern in our neighborhood, throughout Boston and the state. One year ago a Harvard-BU study found that leaks from natural gas distribution pipes cost ratepayers \$90 million a year in greater Boston. Gas leaks also cause explosions: they blew one Boston home off its foundation in 2014, displacing 11 residents, and another in 2015. Gas leaks contribute to asthma, a major health problem in Boston; kill trees by displacing oxygen in the soil; and they are probably Boston's #1 greenhouse gas. Methane, the main component of natural gas, is 86 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide during its first 20 years in the atmosphere. Given that, the Boston Climate Action Network estimates that gas leaks are a bigger climate change factor than all the vehicles in Boston.

The Legislature acted on this issue in 2014. The gas leaks bill it passed that year required gas utilities to report all their known leaks to the Department of Public Utilities and to repair or replace hazardous leaks promptly. Unfortunately, those repairs are not keeping pace with new leaks in Boston's century-old, leak-prone distribution system. Central Boston, including the Back Bay, started 2015 with 201 known leaks and it now has 232. Since gas mains run through many of our streets, the Back Bay is probably leaking very large amounts of gas.

Rep. Ehrlich's two bills would incentivize faster repairs and would fix all the leaks within a decade. The first bill, H2870, would require utilities to pay for the gas their pipes are leaking instead of charging their customers. The second, H2871 would require them to fix all leaks when a street is opened up for substantial repairs.

Please contact Representative Golden and urge him to report these two important bills out of TUE favorably before this session's March 15 deadline. Also please contact Speaker DeLeo and tell him of your concern about this issue.

Yours,

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