

**CITY OF BOZEMAN TESTIMONY**  
**Meyer**  
**House Local Government Committee**  
**01-24-2023**

**Good Afternoon**, Chair Brewster and Local Government Committee Members, My name is **Natalie Meyer (M-E-Y-E-R)**, City of Bozeman's Sustainability Program Manager. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in **OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 241** on behalf of the City of Bozeman.

The buildings we construct today will be with us for the next 50 to 100 years and beyond. Prohibiting local governments, as well as the state building code, from including solar-ready, electric vehicle (EV) ready, and energy storage-ready design will result in poor planning and costly upgrades. Standardizing these practices within the building code will lead to better outcomes for designers, owners, inspectors, and end-users. Excluding a set of technologies from local planning and building codes will ultimately lead to higher costs for businesses and residents--and Montana will economically lag behind the rest of the country.

It should be clarified for the public record that adopting the proposed language in section **50-60-203. Department to adopt state building code by rule**, will prevent the state-adopted building code from including any requirements related to electric vehicles and solar panels now or in the future. As these technologies become more common, some building owners will indeed do this work voluntarily. For safety and standardization, it would be far better for this work to be completed according to the national and state building code. The proposed amendment in 50-60-203 will require the Department of Labor and Industry to revise the code they adopted on June 11, 2022, following a public process that was overseen by the Department of Labor and Industry and the Governor's appointed Building Codes Council.

We understand that there is not a one-size fits all approach for States, nor a one-size fits all approach for local jurisdictions. Every community in Montana has a different set of needs and circumstances, as well as its own public process. The City of Bozeman is committed to public engagement and considers housing affordability a top priority. Our organization is focused on the first price tag of housing, as well as the ongoing cost of living in our community. Since the State of Montana adopted the optional solar-ready appendices in the building code, City staff has discussed solar-ready provisions during at least two public meetings, including the need for a cost-benefit analysis, code training for contractors and inspectors, and potential incentives. By practice, the City develops

public engagement plans that typically span more than a year before undertaking the *minimum* two required public hearings for code adoption. We ask that you consider restraint in this bill, in the same way, local governments will use restraint in implementing solar-ready and EV-ready provisions to ensure that any future requirement truly reflects the needs and expectations of our residents.

As a local example, the City of Bozeman recently completed construction on a new Public Safety Center. During design, the City included solar-ready, energy storage-ready, and EV-ready provisions with these technologies to be installed at a later date. On this \$42M project, the PV and energy storage rough-in pathway added \$13,500 dollars for a future solar array. The EV rough-in pathway cost \$4,500 for 6 parking spaces. After bids came in lower than expected, we had the ability to install a 264kW solar array. This system will enhance the ability of emergency responders to serve the community during extreme weather events, while saving taxpayers nearly \$500,000 over the warranty period of the solar array. **The solar-ready, energy storage-ready, and EV-ready provisions totaled 0.04% of the total project cost.** This installation would have been significantly more expensive--or even impractical--if we had not included solar-ready design.

In the same way, with most automakers planning to electrify large portions of their fleets over the next 5 to 15 years, we should expect EVs to be part of our future. With modest preparation, the cost of EV installations can be reduced significantly. The City of Denver estimates an 80% reduction in EV-Ready (including conduit and circuit) compared to retrofitting a site. EV's likely will not replace every vehicle in Montana, but driving an EV will soon be more affordable than driving a conventional vehicle. Over the past few years, the majority of residential new construction in Bozeman has been multi-family housing. There are currently 1300 apartments under construction in Bozeman. **Without some degree of planning, residents living in multi-family housing will find significant logistical barriers to owning a more affordable vehicle.**

With our growing population and growing energy needs, we can't afford to categorically exclude these technologies. With a modest upfront investment, we can expand energy choice in an "all of the above" energy strategy. Prohibiting this type of planning will conversely limit energy choice and prevent businesses and residents from accessing opportunities to save.

Thank you Chair Brewster and members of the Local Government Committee for hearing my testimony **OPPOSING HOUSE BILL 241** today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.