

CITY OF BOZEMAN TESTIMONY

Deputy Mayor Cunningham

Senate Local Government Committee

03-20-2023

Good Afternoon, Chair Friedel and Committee Members, My name is Terry Cunningham (C-U-N-N-I-N-G-H-A-M), I am the Deputy Mayor of Bozeman. Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in OPPOSITION to HB 241 on behalf of the City of Bozeman.

40% of all new jobs in Montana over the past decade were created in Gallatin County, the majority of which were created in Bozeman. As the economic engine for the state, we know a thing or two about attracting cutting-edge industries with high-paying jobs. Part of that success is anticipating the needs of business sectors for decades to come and creating forward-looking policies to ensure we're meeting those needs.

Many of those companies want buildings – including homes for their employees - that are EV and Solar Ready from the start, rather than having to do costly upgrades to buildings or residences that were constructed without such needed technology. These businesses also strive to save money on their energy costs in the long run by using solar energy, and they recognize that charging infrastructure in garages and parking lots can become a recruiting tool for top talent.

The buildings we construct today will be with us for decades to come. Prohibiting local governments – and the state building code – from including solar-ready, and EV-ready technology will result in poor planning and costly upgrades. With most automakers electrifying a large percentage of their fleet, we expect EVs to be part of our future. Ignoring future technology trends isn't a sound economic development strategy.

With our state's growing population and growing energy needs, we can't afford to categorically exclude these technologies. Good economic development requires investing in the infrastructure to support the jobs of the future. Buildings, - commercial and otherwise – ready to support our 21st century energy and infrastructure needs will make it easier for Montana to attract investment to Montana and to grow our economy.

Thank you, for hearing my testimony opposing House Bill 241 today. I look forward to answering any questions you have.

Like many fast-growing cities Montana cities, Bozeman is experiencing a housing shortage for our workforce, and part of the reason for that shortfall is that housing units that **should** be accommodating long-term renters are becoming short-term accommodations for tourists. We've seen an alarming increase in short term rentals among new construction projects, and while these units may be more profitable for the developer, they are not adding to housing supply for our residents.

I believe that this bill will negate the work of the Governor's Affordable Housing Taskforce, whose goal is to create more affordable housing, not less. And make no mistake, this bill will have a negative impact on workforce housing in our community because it expands where short term rentals can be located, and it hinders our ability to regulate this issue locally.

The Bozeman City Commission and City staff is currently considering policies to stop the proliferation of STRs, and prevent displacement of local community members. In considering those policies, we are examining best practices around the country for regulating STRs.

The Bozeman City Commission firmly believes that the government closest to the people is best suited to govern the people. Local governments are positioned to address the concerns of local community members in a timely fashion, and this bill infringes upon the self-governing powers we are afforded in in the state constitution.

A vote against this bill is a vote in favor of the hard-working Montanans that fuel our economy and our community. I urge a NO vote on this legislation.