Good afternoon. I am Bill Fekete, President of Operating Engineers Local 17. Local 17 represents approximately 2000 members in the Western 7 counties of New York. Our members play a large roll in building Western New York’s infrastructure, be it roads and bridges, electric power generation and natural gas transmission. We also have a significant group of members that manage and operate large scale building systems. Local 17, of course, does not have its own energy policy. We do however support responsible, reasonable and safe energy policies.

 The Climate Action Council’s approach is certain to gain the attention of our membership. Instead of promoting a sensible path to a reduced carbon footprint, the council is proposing to ban the use of natural gas by restricting individual’s rights to choose a path that works for them. In many cases blue collar workers struggle financially to simply replace a household appliance which no longer function. On paper this may seem like a faster means to convert New York’s energy infrastructure. However, the council’s plan in some cases would require a complete system overhaul that would come with an escalated incalculable cost.

Local 17’s members all donate political action funds. We will be utilizing these funds to ensure our elected officials know Local 17 does not support the out right ban of certain types of energy usage as a viable plan. We encourage the Climate Action Council to reconsider its stance and promote a more sensible approach, inclusive of all types of transitional energy usage.