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CAHB Urges Awareness of July 1 Deadline Affecting Building Code Adoption and the Model Low Energy and Carbon Code

The Colorado Association of Home Builders (CAHB) is writing to provide information and guidance to local governments across the Denver metro region regarding the Model Low Energy and Carbon Code (MLECC) and an important statutory deadline that may affect upcoming building code adoption decisions.

Under current Colorado law, after July 1, 2026, any local jurisdiction that adopts or updates a building code must also adopt the Model Low Energy and Carbon Code (MLECC), or a more stringent standard, regardless of whether the update itself is related to energy provisions. Under this framework, routine building code updates, such as transitioning to the 2024 International Codes (I-Codes), would automatically trigger the requirement to adopt the state's model energy and carbon code if those updates occur after the July 1 deadline.

For communities already planning to adopt the 2024 I-Codes, CAHB recommends considering adoption prior to July 1, 2026, if feasible. Doing so allows jurisdictions to proceed with their planned building code updates without automatically triggering the state energy code requirement.

Housing attainability remains a critical issue across Colorado. National housing affordability research indicates that every \$1,000 increase in the price of a new home prices approximately 1,699 Colorado households out of the market. As policymakers evaluate new building code requirements, it is important to carefully consider how those policies may affect the cost of constructing new housing and the ability of families to enter the housing market.

CAHB has raised concerns that some provisions in the MLECC could make Colorado's energy code significantly more complex or unique than national model codes. Nearly 80% of new housing units along the Front Range are produced by national homebuilders operating in multiple states. If Colorado adopts a code that differs substantially from national standards, it could introduce uncertainty and additional costs that may ultimately reduce housing production in the state.

Another significant change proposed in the code involves shifting the primary compliance metric from energy cost to site energy. The IECC consensus committee intentionally maintained energy cost as the primary compliance metric to preserve fuel neutrality and provide flexibility in meeting efficiency goals. Moving to a site energy metric could unintentionally penalize specific fuel sources and skew market signals related to energy choices.

CAHB is also concerned about policies that may effectively encourage full electrification of residential construction. In colder climates such as Colorado, all-electric homes often require specialized cold-climate heat pump systems that can cost several thousand dollars more than traditional heating systems and may

increase winter utility costs for homeowners. Policymakers must also consider the broader impacts that increased electrification could have on Colorado's energy grid as electricity demand continues to grow.

Finally, it is important that any adopted energy code remain consistent with statutory requirements and federal law. State statute requires that the Energy Code Board not adopt provisions that exceed the stringency of the 2024 IECC, and courts across the country are currently evaluating legal challenges related to energy policies under federal law. Ensuring that Colorado's policies remain aligned with national standards will help avoid unnecessary regulatory uncertainty.

Accordingly, CAHB respectfully offers the following recommendations for local governments as they evaluate upcoming building code adoption decisions:

- Consider adopting the 2024 International Codes prior to July 1, 2026 to avoid automatically triggering the state's Model Low Energy and Carbon Code requirement.
- Encourage continued evaluation and refinement of the Model Low Energy and Carbon Code to ensure it balances energy efficiency goals with housing affordability and housing supply considerations.
- Support alignment with the unamended 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) to maintain consistency with national standards and provide greater certainty for builders and local code officials.

CAHB remains committed to working collaboratively with state and local governments to advance policies that improve energy efficiency while preserving housing attainability and maintaining a healthy housing supply across Colorado. We appreciate your consideration of these issues and welcome the opportunity to discuss them further.

Sincerely,



Ted Leighty
Chief Executive Officer
Colorado Association of Home Builders