



# AIA Kentucky

A Society of The American Institute of Architects

August 28, 2017

Commissioner Steve Milby  
Department of Housing, Buildings and Construction  
101 Sea Hero Rd., Ste. 100  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Commissioner Milby:

This letter is regarding the recommendation made to the HBC Advisory Committee that Kentucky's commercial building energy code be changed from the 2012 IECC to the 2009 IECC. After thorough consideration of this issue, AIA Kentucky finds that the negative impacts of such a rollback far outweigh any supposed benefits. Therefore, we strongly encourage the Advisory Committee to maintain, and consider improving upon, the commercial energy code currently in place.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's May 2014 letter to the United States Department of Energy signified a commitment to uphold a higher standard for building efficiency. Not only would the recommended rollback be a retraction of that commitment to our residents and businesses, it would make Kentucky the first state in the nation to scale back the code establishing its minimum energy requirements. This would be an unprecedented step in the wrong direction, putting Kentucky nearly a decade behind the 2018 IECC that is currently being developed.

Fifty percent of states in the US are currently under the 2012 IECC, including our immediate neighbors in Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and Illinois (<http://bcapcodes.org/code-status/commercial/>). This is because most of the design and construction industry recognizes that building energy codes are the most cost-effective method of reducing energy consumption and that higher building energy standards result in life-cycle cost savings, increased occupant comfort, improved health and increased productivity. To the contrary, a reduction in our minimum energy requirements would have many detrimental economic effects.

A weakening of the energy standards currently in place would result in increased costs for building owners and consumers for many years to come. In a US DOE analyses for Kentucky, the energy costs for buildings constructed under the 2009 IECC are estimated to be \$2.70 more per square foot than those designed in accordance with the 2012 IECC. This translates to an additional \$55 million by 2025. The burden of these additional expenses would have a particularly significant impact on our Commonwealth's schools, which could see a 25.2% increase in their energy costs.

In addition, a reversal of the current energy code to an earlier, less-efficient version will result in a higher demand for power. A corresponding need for additional infrastructure would place an increased economic burden on all our Commonwealth's utility ratepayers, not just building owners. This would especially impact Kentucky's low-income households who already spend an average of 7.2% of their income on energy bills.

As an alternative to a broad stroke rollback with the outcomes described above, we respectfully suggest amendments to areas of specific concern and possible exemptions to specific types of construction. As an example, the state of Tennessee has adopted the 2012 IECC but amended it for Factory and Storage buildings to follow an earlier version (<http://bcapcodes.org/code-status/state/tennessee/>). A similar approach may prove beneficial in areas where the 2012 IECC is believed to cause difficulty for business development.

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In closing, we urge the Advisory Committee to keep the Commonwealth of Kentucky on par with the majority of the nation and to act in the interest of all our state's residents by maintaining, and possibly improving, Kentucky's minimum commercial energy requirements. We welcome you to contact us with any questions that you may have and we thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Piper".

Jimmy Piper, AIA  
HBC Building Code Advisory Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. David Carter".

J. David Carter, AIA  
HBC Commercial Code Task Force

cc: Randall Vaughn, AIA, President, AIA Kentucky