

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.  
Chairman, House Corporations Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

**RE: H-7087 – An Act Relating to Business and Professions – Facilitating Business Rapid Response to State Declared Disaster Act of 2024**

Dear Chairman Solomon:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write in support of H-7087, the “Facilitating Business Rapid Response to State Declared Disaster Act of 2024.” This bill would exempt out-of-state businesses and their employees, performing services during declared state or federal disasters or emergencies, from state or local business requirements, as well as state or local taxes or fees. We applaud Speaker Pro Tempore Kennedy’s sponsorship of this bill, which acknowledges the importance of “critical infrastructure” – including the electric and natural gas distribution systems – to our communities and economy.

Rhode Island Energy provides essential energy services to more than 770,000 customers across the Ocean State through the delivery of electricity and natural gas. Our team of 1,300 union and non-union employees is dedicated to helping Rhode Island customers and communities thrive, while supporting the transition to a cleaner energy future – in a safe, reliable, and affordable manner.

Timely repair and restoration of “critical infrastructure,” which includes “gas and electric distribution systems...and related support facilities that service multiple customers or citizens,” is vital to the safety and well-being of all Rhode Islanders and our business community.<sup>1</sup> As a beneficiary of mutual assistance agreements,<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Energy appreciates that H-7087 exempts out-of-state businesses that may support our company in “disaster or emergency-related work” from having “to register, file and remit state or local taxes.”<sup>3</sup>

Rhode Island Energy appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation and thanks the Committee for its consideration and leadership.

Respectfully,



Nicholas S. Ucci  
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee

<sup>1</sup> “Critical infrastructure” is defined at §5-93-3(1), page 2, lines 20-24.

<sup>2</sup> Mutual assistance agreements allow utilities impacted by a major outage event to request help from other utilities across the country. “When called upon, a company will send skilled restoration workers – both company employees and contractors – along with specialized equipment to help with the restoration efforts of a fellow company. The goal of the mutual assistance program is to restore electric service in a safe, effective manner.” EEI, <https://www.eei.org/en/issues-and-policy/reliability-emergency-response>.

<sup>3</sup> Page 3, lines 17-18.