



Climate Jobs Rhode Island
194 Smith St, Providence, RI 02908

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon
House Committee on Corporations
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: Support H-7616, Renewable Ready Program

Dear Chair Solomon,

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) environmental, labor and community organizations committed to working together to make Rhode Island a national leader in the development of a resilient 21st century economy through a Just Transition, one that centers our frontline communities and frontline workers.

Our members range from those who represent the frontline workers who build, repair, and maintain Rhode Island's critical infrastructure and energy systems like the RI Building and Construction Trades Council, to environmental and community organizations like The Nature Conservancy, United Way of RI, and Childhood Lead Action Project, to name a few.

We write in strong support of House bill 7616. The Renewable Ready Program legislation represents a pivotal step forward in promoting the development of renewable energy projects that are necessary to create a more sustainable and resilient future for Rhode Island. Through the establishment of the Renewable Ready program and fund, you are encouraging the environmentally sound expansion of our solar industry. This program compiles the essential information needed to identify preferred sites, and incentivize their redevelopment for the use of renewable energy generating resources.

Passage of H-7616 will play a critical role in meeting our state's emissions reduction mandates, and renewable energy goals, while producing a myriad of benefits for various stakeholders. From a climate jobs perspective, this bill serves as a catalyst for job creation and economic growth in the clean energy sector. The technical support and funding provision ensure that projects continue to get built efficiently, utilizing and promoting the growth of a highly skilled and trained workforce that is prepared to conduct all site preparation, installation, and maintenance, fostering employment opportunities and supporting the local workforce.

Ratepayers also stand to benefit from the deployment of local renewable energy, by alleviating our reliance on volatile fossil fuel costs. This bill not only incentivizes development, it increases the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy generation. By focusing on preferred sites, such as brownfields, this legislation promotes responsible siting of projects and streamlines available resources to minimize expenses associated with site selection and preparation. Additionally, by mobilizing a diverse range of sites, including state-owned properties, public rooftops, and contaminated areas, Rhode Island underscores its commitment to leveraging every available avenue for clean energy adoption.

House bill 7616 is not only a significant step in meeting RI's clean energy goals, but also plays a vital role in achieving climate justice. This legislation has the potential to address historical environmental inequalities and promote equitable access to the benefits of clean energy. By encouraging the redevelopment of previously contaminated sites, many of which can be found in environmental justice communities, you are incentivizing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in communities that have been historically overburdened by pollution and environmental degradation. Moreover, the commitment to prioritizing projects based on surrounding infrastructure helps ensure the benefits of clean energy development are distributed equitably among communities.

Furthermore, this legislation aligns with the Act on Climate and reinforces the state's dedication to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change. The Renewable Ready program and fund ensures renewable energy projects are strategically positioned to make a substantial impact on environmental sustainability. Passage of this legislation is a complementary next step following last year's passage of Senator DiMario's solar siting bill, making preferred sites easier to develop for renewable energy projects, with the financial mechanism to incentivize it. As Rhode Island continues to chart its course for achieving its Act on Climate mandates, we must mobilize every possible appropriate site for our clean energy generation resources and the passage of H-7616 aids in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Michael Roles
Executive Director, Climate Jobs RI



Erica Hammond
Field Director, Climate Jobs RI