



April 2nd, 2024
RE: H7286
House Committee on Corporations

Dear Chairperson and Committee members,

The RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of faith leaders, advocates, and community groups that are united in the belief that we have a moral obligation to fight inequality and to end poverty. With this belief we would like to voice our strong support for bill H7286 which would create an income-sensitive tiered subsidy program to ensure that home energy utility costs are affordable for eligible low-income households.

As you are aware, we are living in a time where housing insecurity, and food insecurity is at an all-time high. Families who already struggle to meet basic needs do not need to worry about how to keep their homes warm or their lights on. The fact is that people are paying too much money on their utility bills. Rhode Island is the state with has the second highest utility rates in the country, second only to Hawaii. To those living check to check, paying high utility costs can be more than just burdensome, they have life threatening impact.

We also want to support 7017 which will extend utility termination moratorium for gas/electricity to May 1st which will allow people more time to find solutions to costly rates that would occur in the winter months. Something that we might not need if we have a tiered program.

In conclusion, our faith traditions call us to take care of those in need, to uplift the poor, to be just,- we cannot ignore societal structures that do the opposite. We need to pass these bills so that people can pay what they can really afford, and we protect people from unnecessary utility shutoffs. Passing this bill is about more than just helping people, it's about fairness, it's about fighting inequality, it's about justice, and about what's right. Thank you for your time, and for supporting struggling families in Rhode Island

Sincerely,

The RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty