

March 20, 2025

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

**RE: H-5577 – Relating to Public Utilities & Carriers – Utility Company Billing Transparency Act**

Dear Chairman Solomon:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write in **opposition** to H-5577. This bill fails to account for the substantial volume of transparent public data and customer communications already made available to electric and natural gas distribution customers and our regulators. As the proposed legislation is superfluous, we respectfully urge the Committee to reject this bill.

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 1,400 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.

Rhode Island Energy fully supports constructive efforts to provide customers with important and valuable information pertaining to their utility services and costs. In fact, **we already do this today** through multiple communication channels including, but not limited to, information provided on utility bills, customer-specific billing inserts, a robust website, customer and community assistance expos, and locally based customer service personnel accessible by phone and email. *If improved transparency for utility customers is truly the goal, we respectfully suggest that all public utilities licensed to conduct business in Rhode Island should be considered and examined with equal rigor.*

Moreover, **our Company is fully regulated by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and all proposed changes to electric and natural gas rates are already supported by voluminous data and expert witness testimony accessible through the PUC’s website.** For example, our regulatory filings *already* include “ratepayer impact analyses that estimates the impact of proposed rate changes on different customer classes” (page 5, lines 8-11), “detailed descriptions of charges in utility company bills” (page 5, lines 12-14), and “explanations of significant rate changes or cost fluctuations” (page 5, lines 15-18).

The legislation also directs the PUC to “oversee compliance” in the provision of “accurate, timely, and clear explanations of rate changes” (page 5, lines 23-25). **The PUC already holds this authority.**

Finally, Rhode Island Energy notes that the proposed amendment on page 3 would strike the requirement for the PUC to consider “the need to maintain the financial health of the distribution company” within the state’s Revenue Decoupling statute. **Not only is this proposed amendment not germane to the broad intent of the bill, but it also undermines foundational principles of**

**utility regulation and financing. The overall financial health of a regulated investor-owned utility is critical to its ability to attract low-cost capital from investors and keep rates affordable for utility customers.** In turn, that capital is reinvested back into Rhode Island communities to support the safe and reliable delivery of energy services, as well as investments facilitating long-term decarbonization. We note that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that regulated utilities are entitled to a reasonable opportunity to recover its costs and earn a fair return on capital investment.<sup>1</sup> State regulation (via the PUC) is in place to strike an appropriate balance between customer and shareholder interests and help ensure that customers are not charged more than is necessary to meet that standard.

In closing, Rhode Island Energy thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation and respectfully requests that H-5577 be rejected in its entirety.

Respectfully,



Nicholas S. Ucci  
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee  
The Honorable Megan L. Cotter, Rhode Island House of Representatives

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see U.S. Supreme Court, Federal Power Commission et. al. v. Hope Natural Gas Co., 320 U.S. 591 (1944) and Bluefield Waterworks & Improvement Co. v. Public Service Commission of West Virginia, 262 U.S. 679 (1923).