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Testimony in support of H5573: Energy Facility Siting Act, Hearing Date April 1, 2025

To Chair Solomon and the honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee:

This act is critically important to level the playing field and allow consideration on the benefits of renewable energy for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, clean air and its health benefits, and compared to the negative climate change impacts and greenhouse gas pollution of fossil fuel based energy.

The bill will greatly help improve RI's outdated transmission infrastructure by incorporating modern transmission technology, energy storage, and high capacity and safer distribution capabilities. These technologies have not been adequately considered by our DPUC and PUC, and by the Utility, which seems to be stuck with their modernization efforts and plans for "smart meters", lagging behind what other States' do to aggressively modernize their grids. The bill will help ensure RI will eventually replace the old-style conductors in our power lines with modern higher conducting alternatives that allow for sending substantially more electricity through the existing grid, while the other technologies help reduce peak demands and level the overall utilization of the grid, further reducing use of the polluting fossil-fired "peaker" plants that currently supply these demands.

In support of this grid modernization, the bill also asks the PUC and OER to conduct an investigation into using the above technologies and to require the Utility to implement these if determined to be cost effective (and they will be). This could really help lower the cost of energy to the rate payers (especially at a time when all Rhode Islanders need it most; which is NOW).

With its focus on grid modernization and due consideration of renewables, the bill is consistent with the other Utility reform bills that have been introduced in this year's legislation, and will add to the long over-due work we urgently need to reach our greenhouse gas reduction mandates and to lower cost for the rate payers.

Please bring the bill to a vote and pass it in 2025. We have no more time to waste!

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Solomon for introducing this important bill.

George Voutes

*George Voutes*