

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon  
House Corporations  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903  
RE: H-5576, Utility Thermal Energy Network and Jobs Act

Dear Chair Solomon and Committee Members,

My name is Corinna-Barbara. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. I am a resident of Providence. I am writing in strong support of House bill 5576, the Utility Thermal Energy Network and Jobs Act -- noting that the threshold for prevailing wage should be set at \$1 million, rather than \$10 million, to ensure fair wages and labor standards.

I am a member of Climate Action Rhode Island (CARI) and RI Citizens Climate Lobby (RICCL) -- two environmental organizations with close to 4000 members across the state.

Thermal energy is one of the least harmful form of energy we have access to so far -- even among sustainable and renewable energy sources. It is clean, efficient, and will significantly reduce emissions without adding stress to our grid. This legislation is valuable in promoting the growth of renewable thermal energy in RI by facilitating the building of renewable thermal energy networks. Geothermal energy can provide reliable energy directly from the ground, dramatically reducing pollution compared to traditional fossil fuels.

I also support this bill as it protects and supports workers in the legacy fossil fuel industry by ensuring we can apply existing skills in the growing renewable energy sector. It promotes job creation, fair labor practices, project labor agreements, and opens pathways to family-sustaining careers through registered apprenticeship programs. This invests in a clear path forward for fossil fuel workers, offering job security and new opportunities in the growing green economy.

The legislation is also well-crafted as it prioritizes frontline and historically burdened communities by emphasizing pilot projects in areas most impacted by economic hardship and industrial pollution.

Developing the full array of clean, renewable, energy is critical to meeting our Act on Climate goals and achieving a just transition. For too long renewable thermal energy has been neglected, and this bill is a critical step toward correcting this.

I urge you to pass H-5576 to advance both economic opportunity and climate action in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Corinna-Barbara Francis  
Member: CARI and RICCL