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Representative Bennett, Chair
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives

Re: Support for H7617 – The Building Decarbonization Act

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Building Decarbonization Act, which aims to address emissions from both existing buildings and new construction in RI. With buildings making up 30% of all GHG emissions in the state, this legislation is an essential step in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the Act on Climate. The bill has two main sections:

Section 1: Building Benchmarking & Performance Improvement

This is a critical step in addressing emissions from large existing buildings as it requires large buildings to report their energy usage to the state. Three years after collecting the data, the Office of Energy Resources must establish emissions reductions standards in line with the Act on Climate. Rhode Island must join the 70+ jurisdictions that have implemented either building energy reporting or emission reduction standard policies. In a small state such as Rhode Island, it makes the most sense to implement these policies on a statewide basis, in line with An Act on Climate.

Section 2: Phase in of All-electric New Construction

This section tackles emissions from new construction by phasing in requirements for all-electric new construction. We cannot continue to make the problem worse by building with fossil fuel equipment, which is designed to last 20 years, bringing the state further away from the Act on Climate mandate to reduce emissions 45% by 2030 - now only six years away. All-electric new construction is better for our climate, our health, and our wallets.

It has been clear to me for some time that individuals alone cannot and should not bear the burden of reducing emissions. That was a lie pushed by big business to shift the responsibility away from them. This effort to reduce global warming is the responsibility of everyone, and that includes the government as well as businesses.

I've taken my steps by driving an electric vehicle, installing solar panels and a heat pump water heater and reducing food waste, recycling, and composting. Now it is the state's turn to take big steps, like this bill. **If we want to meet the Act on Climate, we must reduce emissions from buildings. H7617 will put us on track to do just that.**

I respectfully urge the Committee and full General Assembly to vote in favor of its passage.

Sincerely,

Cathy Solomon