



Rhode Island House of Representatives
Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Representative David A. Bennett, Chair

March 18, 2024

In support of H7617: Building Decarbonization Act

Dear Chair Bennett and Committee Members:

The more than 3,000 members of Climate Action Rhode Island (CARI)—a grassroots group working to eliminate the extraction and use of fossil fuels—strongly support and urge you to pass H7617, the Building Decarbonization Act. **H7617 is CARI's top priority for the 2024 legislative session.**

Buildings in Rhode Island are a major source of greenhouse gases and are responsible for nearly 30% of our states total emissions¹. In contrast to other major GHG emitting sectors such as electricity generation and transportation, Rhode Island currently has no plan to reduce building emissions. We must pass the Building Decarbonization Act this legislative session to improve emissions monitoring and start reducing emissions in both new construction and existing buildings. (70 percent of the buildings that will stand in 2050 are already built.²) Without the benchmarking requirements and standard this act would establish, we can't begin to put a dent in our building emissions and don't have a hope of meeting our Act on Climate requirements to be net-zero by 2050.

By transitioning to all-electric buildings by 2050, we will be able to eliminate 1.5 million metric tons of emitted carbon dioxide, the same as taking more than 300,000 cars off the road. This will not only reduce adverse health impacts of air pollution but help to reduce the risk of devastating climate impacts.³

The Building Decarbonization Act requires energy reporting from large buildings. With these emissions reports, the state will be able to formulate an emissions standard for large buildings, setting clear, enforceable targets for large building owners to meet in the emissions reduction process. The Act also addresses electrification of new buildings (the easiest to electrify), with new public buildings required to be all-electric and a very reasonable phased program for electrification in other new construction, ensuring a rational and fair approach to building electrification in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island has been a climate leader in several areas, including the 2022 passage of the 100% Renewable Electricity Standard, with the nation's most aggressive goal of reaching 100% renewable electricity by 2033. To avert the worst impacts of climate change we must actually put that clean electricity to use and stop heating our buildings with dirty fossil fuels. Passing the Building Decarbonization Act would allow us to join the six states and 50 municipalities that already have building energy reporting requirements in place as well as the four states, one county, and seven municipalities that have building performance standards.⁴ Providence is

¹ [2020 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory](#)

² [Green Energy Consumers Alliance](#)

³ [Electric Buildings 2021: Repowering Homes and Businesses for our Health and Environment](#)

⁴ [Green Energy Consumers Alliance](#)

among those municipalities that have already successfully implemented building energy reporting—saving money and reducing emissions.⁵ Because the mandates of Act on Climate are statewide, we must establish a state-level policy to reduce our building emissions

To meet the Act on Climate mandate by reducing current and eliminating future emissions from buildings in Rhode Island, we urge you to vote for H7617 today!

Sincerely,

Alexander Naydich & Denise Taliaferro
Politics Team Leads
Climate Action Rhode Island

⁵ [City of Providence](#)