

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

March 21st, 2024

Re: Support for H7617 – The Building Decarbonization Act

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the Committee,

My name is George Hasapidis and I am a resident of Foster, RI. 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 greenhouse gas emissions in the state, this legislation is an essential step in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the goals set by 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. My mom recently moved to a newly-constructed development in Glocester, and I was very disappointed to see the missed opportunity: Instead of building all electric, the developer put in massive underground propane tanks to fuel the gas furnaces, stoves, and water heaters. Especially given the incentives available in the Inflation Reduction Act, I can't help but think the developer could have made a real contribution in reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also probably saving on his own costs of construction! Clearly this is an area where legislation can steer builders toward helping our state meet the carbon reduction goals it has set.

Personally, my wife and I just finished decarbonizing our home; we burned the last of our heating oil a few weeks ago, and are now heating solely with our air source heat pump and heat pump water heater (and occasionally our wood stove). I have someone coming to remove the empty oil tank and old oil boiler in a few weeks, and couldn't be happier about saying goodbye to fossil fuels.

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.

Thanks for your time and attention,
George Hasapidis
Foster, RI