

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 Mary Helldorfer Cooney and I am a resident of North Kingstown, 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 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 is critical that we meet the important and ambitious targets of the Act on Climate, and to do so, we must reduce emissions from buildings. H7617 is a step in the right direction. I respectfully urge the Committee and full General Assembly to vote in favor of its passage.

Sincerely,

Mary Helldorfer Cooney
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North Kingstown, RI 02852