



March 21, 2024

Chair David A. Bennett
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-7617 – Building Decarbonization Act

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H-7617, the Building Decarbonization Act of 2024. We understand that the transportation and building sectors are two of our largest emitters of noxious greenhouse gas (GHG) —at around 38% and 30%, respectively. The Building Decarbonization Act is sorely needed because, at present, we have no policy or guidance to address these emissions.

We know that electrification is key. There are currently some possible rebates, tax credits, and federal funding to address building decarbonization by incentivizing retrofits with heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and induction stoves. Those are a start, but we need much more in the form of policy and recommendations as to how to achieve our critical Act on Climate goals. To inform such a policy, we need data.

Rhode Island's banner Act on Climate, which passed in 2021, requires that we achieve graduated reduction of 1990 level emissions, culminating in net zero by 2050. Since 70% of our building stock in the year 2050 will be composed of buildings that are already here today, these existing structures are a major focus of this bill.

H-7617 requires that, starting in 2025, large public buildings of 25,000 square feet or more report their energy usage and emissions to the State for three years. This would then allow the Office of Energy Resources (OER) to set standards, with guidance on how to gradually reduce emissions. In 2026, the same would pertain to private buildings of greater than 50,000 square feet, and in 2027, to private buildings greater than 25,000 square feet.

Four other states, one county, and seven municipalities have already adopted such standards according to Green Energy Consumers Alliance, and others are in development.

By year end 2026, all new construction statewide would be required to be all electric with some exceptions.

There are many important climate bills under consideration this session, but time is particularly of the essence for this one since we need three years of data before informed policy and recommendations can be made.

H-7617 is a significant first step in moving buildings away from extreme pollution causing fossil fuels and towards electrification and other efficient energy sources, thereby achieving lower energy costs and helping to meet our state's mandated climate goals.

RI NOW supports passage of H-7617 and we strongly urge you to pass it out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Lesley Bunnell
President
RI NOW



Giona Picheco
Legislative Chair
RI NOW

With support from Jessie Kingston, RI NOW member.

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. Our mission is to take action to bring women into full participation in all aspects of public and private life without experiencing barriers based on gender. Our key issue areas include economic equity, ending violence against women, reproductive health and justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ civil rights, and ending racism.