

Rhode Island House of Representatives
Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
David A Bennet, Chair
March 21, 2024

In support of H7617: Building Decarbonization Act

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee:

The Rhode Island Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby, a national, non-partisan, climate advocacy not-for-profit has over 600 members. As a group leader of the RI Chapter, I wish to express our chapter's support for the Building Decarbonization Act, bill H7617.

Section 1. Building Benchmarking and Performance Improvement

This section requires large building owners to report their energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and water use to the state Office of Energy Resources (OER), then to reduce those emissions over time according to a set of standards that OER will develop.

Section 2. All Electric New Construction

This section sets forth a tiered approach to transition to all-electric new construction. By 2025 all new construction must be electric-ready and all new public buildings above a defined cost threshold must be 100% electric. By 2027 all new construction must be all electric.

Passage of H7617 is one of CCL's top 2024 legislative priorities for the following reasons:

Reduces a significant source of carbon emissions in line with the Act On Climate.

The Act on Climate mandates that Rhode Island be net zero by 2050. Buildings constitute nearly 30% of the state's carbon emissions. In 2050, existing buildings are expected to constitute 70% of our building stock; new construction the remaining 30 per cent.

Uses a well designed data-driven approach. (Section 1)

Approach includes data collection, analysis, use of industry recognized tools, involvement of key stakeholders, and ongoing monitoring and reporting that facilitates effective management.

Develops the Building Performance Standard. (Section 1)

The building standard will define the energy targets and timelines for compliance based on data and expert input. This standard is essential to reach the state's 2050 climate goals.

Includes a governance framework that includes climate justice. (Section 1)

Roles for the Green Building Advisory Committee, and a new Environmental Justice Advisory Board, are defined to guide creation of fair and equitable performance standards.

Positions Rhode Island to leverage the experience of others. (Section 1)

Six states and fifty municipalities are energy benchmarking buildings. Several others have adopted Building Performance Standards. Rhode Island can benefit from their experience.

Mandates a phased, state-buildings-first approach for electric buildings. (Section 2)

New buildings must be electric-ready and new state building all electric next year. All-electric construction will be required two years later, with justifiable exceptions allowed.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Dresser, Group Leader, Rhode Island Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby