

Support for an expanded Budget Article 3 Section 15

Dear House Finance Committee, Clerk O'Brian and Chair Abney,

I strongly support the state budget provisions that provide staffing and a framework to begin our state's building decarbonization process.

However, I also urge you to expand on this proposal, since it is inadequate to deal with the legal requirements of the state Act on Climate, which comes due in just five years.

We are now living under a federal government that is openly hostile to clean energy and the environment in general. So it's more important than ever for states to take up the challenge. Our children's future depend on it.

Fulfilling our duty to the health and well-being of future generations will require difficult decisions and political courage. The governor's budget displays a stunning lack of urgency in meeting this challenge.

While I support the initial steps taken here, I urge this committee to take a more urgent approach that includes:

- 1) including requirements for private building benchmarking
- 2) a more aggressive timeline for reducing building emissions

The benchmarking report recently unveiled by the EC4 described benchmarking as an overwhelming task. But the strides made by Providence on this same issue demonstrates that the state exaggerates the onerousness of this task.

Please consider a few points of comparison between the proposed EC4 plan and the reality of what Providence has already done:

	The State Plan	Providence
Benchmarking for large public buildings	6 years	1 year (task completed)
Benchmarking for large private buildings	No plan at all	1 year (task is underway and slated for completion this year)
Time needed to issue requirements for building improvements	10 years	Legislation slated to be introduced at the end of this year

Furthermore, the state has a significant head start on building benchmarking since:

- 1) The work has already been completed in the state's largest city.

2) The benchmarking plan, which the EC4 says will take 3 years to develop, has already been developed and carried out in Providence. In addition, 7 states have already acted on building decarbonization, as have many universities and hospitals. There are plenty of successful plans for the state of Rhode Island do draw on.

3) Providence has already negotiated and reached agreements with Energy RI, builders, and landlords, which should streamline the same job for the state.

The building decarbonization bills submitted by Senator Meghan Kallman and Representative Rebecca Kislak provide a much more realistic timeline and include large private buildings in their plan. The senate finance committee should approve a budget that is consistent with their plan.

Thank you in advance for your action to protect Rhode Island's climate.

Bill Ibelle
Providence