

Steven Sepe

From: Moretti, Katelyn <katelyn_moretti@brown.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 12:28 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: Written support for: 2023 -- H 5548

Subject: Testimony in Support of H5548 – Transitioning Rhode Island Healthcare Systems to Renewable Energy

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Katelyn Moretti, and I am an emergency physician practicing in Rhode Island. I am writing to express my strong support for H 5548, which would require Rhode Island healthcare systems to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. As a frontline healthcare provider, I witness firsthand the devastating health effects of climate change on our patients and communities, and I urge you to take action to mitigate these impacts by supporting this bill.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it is a public health crisis. Extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and worsening air quality directly contribute to increased emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths. Heat waves disproportionately affect our elderly, low-income, and chronically ill patients, leading to dehydration, heatstroke, and cardiovascular complications. Rising temperatures also exacerbate respiratory illnesses such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), conditions that are already prevalent in our state.

Moreover, fossil fuel combustion is a major contributor to air pollution, which is linked to a range of serious health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and premature births. Rhode Island's healthcare facilities, which are responsible for a significant share of energy consumption, have a moral and professional obligation to reduce their carbon footprint. By transitioning to renewable energy, our healthcare systems can not only mitigate climate-related health risks but also set an example for sustainability, resilience, and responsible stewardship of our environment.

Importantly, investing in renewable energy will improve public health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs. Studies have shown that reducing fossil fuel emissions leads to lower rates of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, ultimately saving lives and lessening the burden on our healthcare infrastructure. Additionally, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power can enhance the resilience of healthcare facilities by ensuring a stable and reliable energy supply, particularly in the face of extreme weather events and grid disruptions.

As a physician, my duty is to protect and promote the health of my patients. Rhode Island must take decisive action to address the health harms of climate change. In order to comply with our goal of state net neutrality by 2050 as dictated by the Act on Climate bill, our health sector must be held accountable for its own carbon production. Passing H 5548 is a crucial step in safeguarding the health of our residents and future generations. I urge you to support this critical legislation for the well-being of our patients and our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to provide further information or discuss this issue in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Moretti, MD

Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine