

Testimony in support of H5450: All-Electric Building Act  
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To Chair Casey and the honorable Members of the Municipal Government and Housing Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for H5450.

Buildings make up nearly one half of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in RI -- if one includes emissions from the electricity used by buildings. Any new fossil fuel infrastructure we build into new buildings is likely to be used for at least another 20 years -- locking the owners and tenants into more expensive and less efficient heating and cooling systems for many years, and depriving them of the cost-savings associated with electric appliances.

Building new fossil fuel infrastructure would also lock RI into higher GHG emissions levels for many more years -- with all the associated costs of dealing with climate disasters and emergencies. The state is already having to pay tens of millions of dollars to deal with climate emergencies and for climate change mitigation.

Studies have shown that the cost of building all-electric and installing all-electric appliances has been steadily declining. Building all-electric homes and buildings is now only marginally more expensive, if at all, than building with fossil fuel infrastructure. The technology for all-electric buildings has advanced rapidly. There are many companies in the state actively engaged in designing and building all-electric buildings, from architectural firms, to developers, to construction companies.

RI has a large number of building projects that have designed and built all-electric buildings -- this is being done and very feasible in RI.

As an example, Crossroads -- the non-profit organization providing support to homeless individuals in the state, built Somerset House, a large building, with 176 one-bedroom apartments, as a net-zero building. According to the Crossroads director, of the total cost of the project of \$83 million, it cost only \$860K to install solar panels on the building, which provides 30% of the buildings total electricity needs, and the total additional cost of building all-electric was less than \$1 million, out of a total of \$83 million. And this will save future tenants large amounts on their utility bills.

As RI increases its supply of renewable energy the cost of electricity is also expected to come down considerably. It makes much more sense to invest a relatively small amount now in order to save tens of millions of dollars in the future on climate emergencies and mitigation.

We have a mandate from the RI Act on Climate to reduce GHG emissions, and to achieve that we need to stop burning fossil fuels in existing buildings as soon as possible, as well as to maximize the use of green energy in new buildings, which all-electric construction will promote.

H5450 takes a balanced and practical approach. It allows for cases of buildings where all-electric construction may not be feasible, thus permitting electric-ready in those cases. The bill also excludes hospitals, medical facilities, laboratories for biological research, and restaurants from the all-electric requirement, allowing for mixed fuel use in these type of buildings.

I urge you to bring the bill to a vote this session. Thank you very much for your attention, and thank you to Representative Handy for introducing this important bill.

Respectfully,  
Corinna-Barbara Francis