

Via Electronic Mail

March 20, 2025

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey  
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
Room 101, State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: CLF **Supports** House Bill No. 5450 – All-Electric Building Act

Dear Chair Casey:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill No. 5450, the All-Electric Building Act. H-5450 would reduce greenhouse gas (“GHG”) emissions from the heating of homes and businesses by ensuring that new buildings are heated using clean electric heat pumps and appliances rather than fossil fuels. Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) supports this bill and wishes to thank its sponsors for their attention to this important issue.

CLF is a member-supported non-profit environmental advocacy organization working throughout New England to counter climate change, restore the health of our oceans, embolden new energy infrastructure, and safeguard health, quality of life, and economic prosperity for future generations. We are working to cut emissions from the heating sector and push for affordable and equitable heating policies in Rhode Island and across New England.

In Rhode Island, the heating of homes and businesses, including associated leaks from the gas distribution system, accounts for approximately 30% of statewide GHG emissions.<sup>1</sup> This figure does not include industrial heating (another 10% of state emissions), and likely underestimates emissions associated with the gas distribution system.<sup>2</sup> Decarbonizing the heating of Rhode Island’s homes and businesses is thus a large and important part of achieving the mandates of the Act on Climate, which requires GHG emissions reductions of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, 80% by 2040, and net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R.I. Dep’t of Env’tl. Mgmt., *2022 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory* (2024), available at [https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f\\_1.pdf](https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2024-12/ghg-inventory-2022-f_1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See Stockholm Env’tl. Inst. & Brown Univ. Climate and Dev. Lab, *Deeper Decarbonization in the Ocean State: The 2019 Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Reduction Study* 20–23 (2019), available at <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/deeper-decarbonization-in-the-ocean-state.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-2.

It has become clear that a critical part of decarbonizing our heating sector will be converting buildings from dirty, polluting heating fuels like gas, oil, and propane, to clean electric heat pumps and appliances. Rhode Island has a huge number of existing buildings that will need to be converted before 2050, which represents a significant policy challenge. Each time we permit a new building that is heated with fossil fuels, we add to that challenge, creating one more building that needs to be converted in the next 25 years. As the saying goes: “If you’re in a hole, stop digging.”

In addition to the significant climate impacts of fossil fuel heating and appliances, reliance on these technologies has an adverse impact on indoor air quality, including release of NO<sub>2</sub>—a respiratory irritant that results in asthma, coughing, trouble breathing, and other respiratory symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

H-5450 will reduce emissions from the heating of homes and businesses and improve indoor air quality by ensuring that new buildings are heated using clean electric heat pumps and appliances rather than fossil fuels. The bill also contains provisions to ensure housing and electricity affordability, and exemptions for commercial or industrial uses which cannot feasibly operate using commercially available all-electric appliances.

The policies advanced by H-5450 are consistent with the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council’s (“EC4”) 2022 update to the state climate plan, which recommends pursuit of energy efficiency and heating electrification, and notes that “[b]uilding codes can help the State set the trajectory for net-zero green building standards, prepare our new buildings to be EV- and solar-ready, and prepare our buildings to be completely electrified.”<sup>5</sup>

H-5450 won’t solve the problem of GHG emissions from building heating all at once, but it is a meaningful step we can and should take this year. Addressing the climate crisis, and doing so in a way that minimizes costs and other impacts to Rhode Islanders, is a complicated policy challenge. The more we delay action the harder it becomes. Conversely, proactively addressing the challenge will put Rhode Island in position to achieve the mandates of the Act on Climate and help to prevent the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

CLF respectfully urges passage of H-5450. Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

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<sup>4</sup> Eric D. Lebel et al., *Methane and NO<sub>x</sub> Emissions from Natural Gas Stoves, Cooktops, and Ovens in Residential Homes*, 56 *Envtl. Sci. & Tech.* 2529 (2022), at C, I, available at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04707>.

<sup>5</sup> R.I. Exec. Climate Change Coordinating Council, *Rhode Island 2022 Climate Update* 79-85 (2022), available at <https://climatechange.ri.gov/media/1261/download?language=en>.

Sincerely,



James Crowley  
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cc: Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
The Honorable Arthur Handy  
Darrèll Brown, Vice President for Rhode Island, CLF