



For a thriving New England

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BY EMAIL

March 4, 2021

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
House Lounge, State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: CLF Supports House Bill No. 5357 – An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers –
Long-Term Contracting Standard for Renewable Energy

Dear Chair Bennett:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 5357, a bill that clarifies that all interconnection and standby transformer costs related to the Block Island wind project are to be socialized by National Grid throughout the state of Rhode Island. The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) supports this bill and wishes to thank its sponsor for his 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 have worked extensively on renewable energy issues.

H-5357 clarifies R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-26.1-7, the statute that approved the Town of New Shoreham Project (the “Project”). The Project has several components, including (a) an offshore wind farm south of Block Island, (b) an undersea transmission cable and related facilities connecting the wind farm to Block Island, and (c) an undersea transmission cable and related facilities connecting Block Island to the mainland electric power grid. There is some ambiguity in the statute as to who is responsible for costs associated with the last of these items—i.e., whether Block Island ratepayers alone should bear the costs of connecting Block Island to the mainland grid, or whether the costs should be spread across all Rhode Island ratepayers.

H-5357 resolves this ambiguity—which has become the subject of litigation—by clarifying that the costs should be spread across all Rhode Island ratepayers. In addition to being the most natural reading of the statute as it was originally signed into law, this reading avoids saddling Block Islanders with huge, unfair costs that they were told they wouldn’t have to pay when the Project was proposed.

While apportioning the cost among all Rhode Island ratepayers would result in a charge of \$5 per ratepayer, forcing Block Island ratepayers to bear the costs alone would result in each paying a whopping \$1,275. And while the infrastructure connecting Block Island to the mainland grid principally benefits Block Islanders, the Project as a whole greatly benefits the entire state. Connecting Block Island to the mainland grid is also necessary for Block Island to fully end its reliance on the

diesel generator that provided its electricity prior to the construction of the wind farm. When the wind farm was proposed, Block Islanders were assured that it wouldn't significantly raise their utility bills and that it would end their reliance on the dirty, noisy, expensive diesel generator. H-5357 ensures that the Project will fulfill these promises.

CLF respectfully urges passage of H-5357. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



James Crowley
Staff Attorney, CLF Rhode Island

cc: HouseEnvironmentandNaturalResources@rilegislature.gov
Representative Blake Anthony Filippi (by email)