



Representative David Bennett, Chair
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island House of Representatives

March 26, 2021

Dear Chair Bennett,

On behalf of Green Energy Consumers Alliance and our thousands of members across Rhode Island, **I write in support of House Bill 6144. This bill would ensure that Rhode Island's successful energy efficiency and renewable energy fund programs continue to provide benefits to Rhode Islanders for years to come.**

Green Energy Consumers Alliance is a nonprofit advocate based in Providence, Rhode Island and Boston, Massachusetts. We are dedicated to speeding the transition to a low-carbon energy system in New England. We help our thousands of members make sustainable energy choices, and we advocate for ambitious and practical state energy policy.

Rhode Island's Least Cost Procurement statute, originally enacted in 2006, launched Rhode Island's nation-leading energy efficiency programs, which have saved money for Rhode Islanders, increased energy system reliability, created jobs, and reduced our emissions. The extension of the bill in 2015 allowed these programs to continue working to improve our energy system. The energy efficiency programs have become an integral part of our electricity and natural gas systems, helping to meet our energy demand as reliably—if not more so—than energy supply. Simply put, we can't afford to let our energy efficiency and system reliability program expire. Green Energy Consumers urges the committee to support the simple extension of H6144.

Benefits of the programs:

- 1 million+ metric tons of carbon emissions reduced per year
- ~800+ green jobs created per year
- \$400 million+ cash value of benefits delivered to Rhode Islanders every year. This value includes avoided spend on utility bills and improved reliability of energy systems.
- And more!

Our energy efficiency programs invest upfront to reap the benefits for ratepayers.

Traditionally, utility companies meet energy and gas needs by buying more natural gas and electricity from the suppliers. This is a problem because energy efficiency and energy conservation measures are often a less expensive way to meet energy needs. This statute takes a strategic and cost-effective approach to meeting energy needs: it requires the utility company to invest in energy efficiency measures that are cost-effective and less expensive than buying more energy supply. That means that for every dollar ratepayers pay towards the energy efficiency programs, they're getting more than a dollar back in benefits.

greenenergyconsumers.org

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The positive impact of these programs is reliable and verified.

We see this impact in Rhode Island's reduced total spend on energy. Although our electric and natural gas rates are higher than many other states in the country, Rhode Islanders spend, per capita, less on energy than 34 other states. Our excellent energy efficiency programs are doing their job to lower the bills of residents and businesses. Passing H6144 will help our per capita energy spending get even lower.

The programs also have uniquely excellent transparency, accountability, oversight, and verification. Every measure is approved by a Technical Working Group that advises National Grid; the Energy Efficiency Resource Management Council—an independent council with members nominated by the General Assembly and Governor; a staff of expert consultants; and the Public Utilities Commission. After installation, the reported savings of energy efficiency measures are evaluated and verified by independent studies. Again and again, these independent studies have proven that our energy efficiency programs are working.

Energy efficiency is the foundational strategy to meet our climate goals.

We commend the house for passing An Act On Climate last week. Programs like energy efficiency, which save money for Rhode Islanders while reducing emissions, are the type of programs that can help us implement the Act On Climate. In fact, our energy efficiency programs are the primary reason that we have met our climate targets up to this point. Over the next decade, we strongly urge the state to double down on energy efficiency as we launch our energy transition.

In future legislation, we hope to work with legislators to strengthen our energy efficiency programs even further. Green Energy Consumers believes that these programs provide a strong framework to ramp up investments in building energy efficiency and heating electrification. We also believe that these programs could do even more to provide resources to low income Rhode Islanders to reduce their energy bills and improve the safety and comfort of their homes. Although these programs have done a great job to deliver benefits to Rhode Islanders so far, they could be doing even more.

H6144 extends support for the Renewable Energy Fund.

The Renewable Energy Fund is one of the state's best resources for small-scale solar and solar on developed land. Over the last few years, it has become increasingly clear that Rhode Island must be careful to avoid building solar on the state's most important open and green spaces. Supporting the Renewable Energy Fund, which primarily invests in solar that does not impact greenspace, is a great way to ensure that new solar is properly sited.

This bill does need one small edit. A clerical oversight resulted in the deletion of "electricity and natural gas" from the original text in the first section; we are confident that a Sub-A can fix this small oversight.

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Sincerely,

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