



In support of HR5161: To Study Public Ownership of Public Utilities

Rhode Island House of Representatives
Members of the House Corporations Committee
Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chair

March 20, 2025

Dear Chair Solomon and Committee Members:

The more than 3,500 members of Climate Action Rhode Island (CARI), a grassroots group working to for the just transition to renewable energy system strongly support and urge you to pass H5161, to initiate a study of the pros and cons of moving to a publicly owned utility.

Although it is little known, publicly owned utilities (POU) serve millions of Americans, and their record of providing reliable energy at lower cost than investor-owned utilities (IOU) is well documented. The reason for this is simple. IOUs are beholden to their investors and to maximize their profits, and their profits are determined by their capital investments, not the quality or the service they provide their customers.

One comprehensive study documented that customers of public utilities were charged 17% less for their electricity than customers of IOUs, their supply was more reliable with outages being resolved 61% faster, and POUs contributed 9% more in funds to local communities than the taxes paid to state and local communities by IOUs¹.

That all said we recognize that such a transition would not be simple and must be explored. POUs vary in their effectiveness due to a variety of factors including how they are governed, and in some jurisdictions onerous regulations that they as a public entity, have to operate under. These issues will have to be explored, as well as the exact mechanism of the transition from our current investor-owned utility. An in-depth study of all of these issues will highlight the benefits of POUs, will delineate any cons of this option, will be a resource to educate the public, and importantly, counter the misinformation that the utility will surely promulgate, as was demonstrated in Maine when this issue to put in front of voters in 2024 and the utilities spent over \$34 million to oppose it.

Please pass H5161 and advocate for it to be brought to a floor vote this session. There is no reason to wait.

Respectively submitted,

/s/ Jeffrey Migneault

Jeff Migneault

Co-President

Climate Action Rhode Island

¹ 2025 Public Power Statistical Report | American Public Power Association