



Rhode Island House of Representatives
Members of the House Corporations Committee
Representative Soloman, Chair

April 1, 2025

In support of H5576: Utility Thermal Networks and Jobs Act

Dear Chair Soloman and Committee Members:

The more than 3,500 members of Climate Action Rhode Island (CARI)—a grassroots group working to eliminate the extraction and use of fossil fuels—strongly support and urge you to pass H5576, the Utility Thermal Networks and Jobs Act. **H5576 is one of CARI's select endorsed bills for the 2025 legislative session.**

Buildings in Rhode Island are a major source of greenhouse gases (GHG) and are responsible for nearly 30% of our state's total emissions. In contrast to other major GHG emitting sectors such as electricity generation and transportation, Rhode Island currently has no plan to reduce building emissions.

We must keep in mind the magnitude of the necessary transition of our energy infrastructure, especially elimination of the fossil fuel infrastructure to meet our climate goals and to have a livable future. We must start now putting into place those technologies that will make this transition as successful and as beneficial to all as possible.

Networked geothermal heat sources is one of the essential technologies for this transition. This bill requires that Rhode Island utilities create 3-5 pilot geothermal projects the results of which will more accurately quantify the benefits and costs and enhance their ability to spread this climate solution, as appropriate, to other areas. Importantly this technology employs the same skilled workers that now maintain the obsolete natural gas infrastructure.

What often gets lost when discussing solutions aimed at reducing our GHG emissions are the other benefits of these technologies. Geothermal networks provide clean heat: it does not produce local air pollution like heating buildings with fossil fuels does. This pollution contributes to many health impacts including pediatric asthma and premature deaths. It is estimated that fossil fuel pollution leads to 350,000 deaths annually in the U.S. alone.

Also, ground source geothermal networks are an incredibly inexpensive way to heat a home or other building. Like with many renewable solutions there are higher upfront costs, but over the medium to longer term there are large cost savings. That is why it is necessary for public and private institutions to initiate these projects and to increase their scalability as they can afford the initial investments.

This bill also has many other benefits including promoting the retraining and transitioning of utility workers and equitable cost recovery by the utilities.

For all these reasons we urge you to vote for H5576 today!

Respectively submitted,

/s/ Jeffrey Migneault

Jeff Migneault
Co-President
Climate Action Rhode Island