GREEN ENERGY CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

Representative Solomon, Chair **April 1st, 2025**

House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Providence, RI 02908

RE: Support for House Bill 5816 – Offshore Wind 1200MW Target Bill

Dear Chair Solomon and members of the committee,

Green Energy Consumers Alliance is an environmental non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island and Boston, Massachusetts with a mission to speed a just transition to a zero-carbon future. We help our thousands of members make sustainable energy choices, and we advocate for ambitious and practical state energy policy. On behalf of Green Energy Consumers Alliance, I write in **Support of House Bill 5816,** which requires Rhode Island to procure a total of 1200MW of Offshore wind by 2029**.**

Rhode Island is falling behind on procuring offshore wind. According to the ***Road to 100% Electricity Report***, the state needs to procure up to 1,100 MW of offshore wind to meet the 100% Renewable Energy Standard (RES) (note that this study was based on achieving the RES by 2030, and the RES is now by 2033). With energy demand increasing, we added an additional 100MW to make the total target 1200MW. As of today, only 430MW has been procured - 630MW pending final contract execution with SouthCoast wind. Massachusetts is required by law to issue another offshore wind procurement this Fall. If Rhode Island doesn't participate, we risk missing out on the most viable projects.

Why Offshore Wind?

Rhode Island is especially well-positioned to take advantage of offshore wind. We have some of the strongest winds off our coasts, shallow waters ideal for turbine installation, and densely populated coastlines with high energy demand. Listed below are some of the tremendous benefits offshore wind brings to our states.

Energy Independence & Protection Against Fossil Fuel Price Volatility

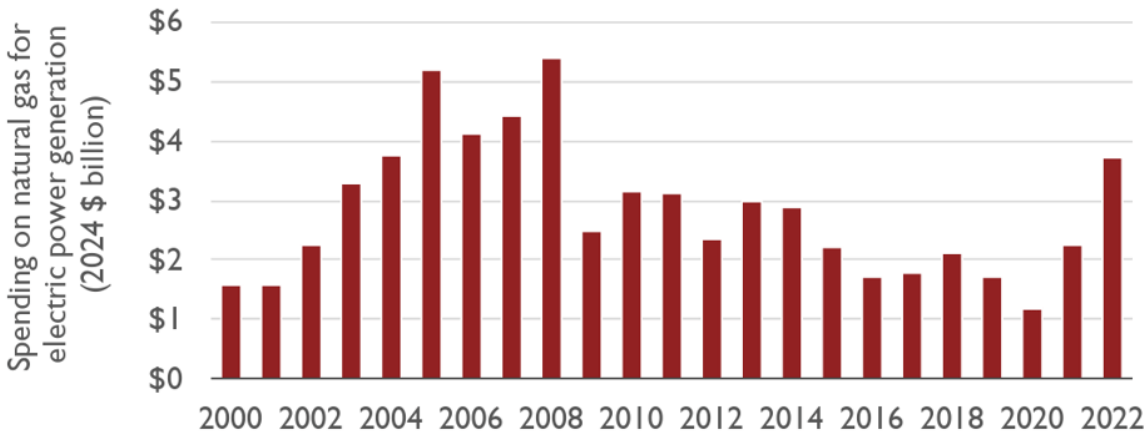
Offshore wind provides stable homegrown energy right here in New England. We wouldn't have to rely on the volatile global fossil fuel market where geopolitical events can send prices skyrocketing. You may remember in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine and power prices in our region surged due to our reliance on imported fossil fuels. Offshore wind would have greatly mitigated that had we had it up and running at scale then. We also saw electricity prices spike during the coldest days of January and February as gas-fired power plants had to pay more for gas or oil.

Job Creation

The offshore wind industry is a growing economic sector that has the potential to generate thousands of high-quality union jobs, from manufacturing and construction to operations and maintenance.

Local Economic Growth

In addition to creating jobs, offshore wind attracts local investments and revenue. It also keeps money in New England. Right now, we are sending an average of $3 billion out of our regional economy each year for natural gas.



Source: Sierra Club & Synapse Energy Economics Inc. ***Charting the Wind Report***

Improved Public Health

Offshore wind allows us to transition away from fossil fuels which produce harmful air pollutants such as Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) that are linked to respiratory diseases and other health issues.

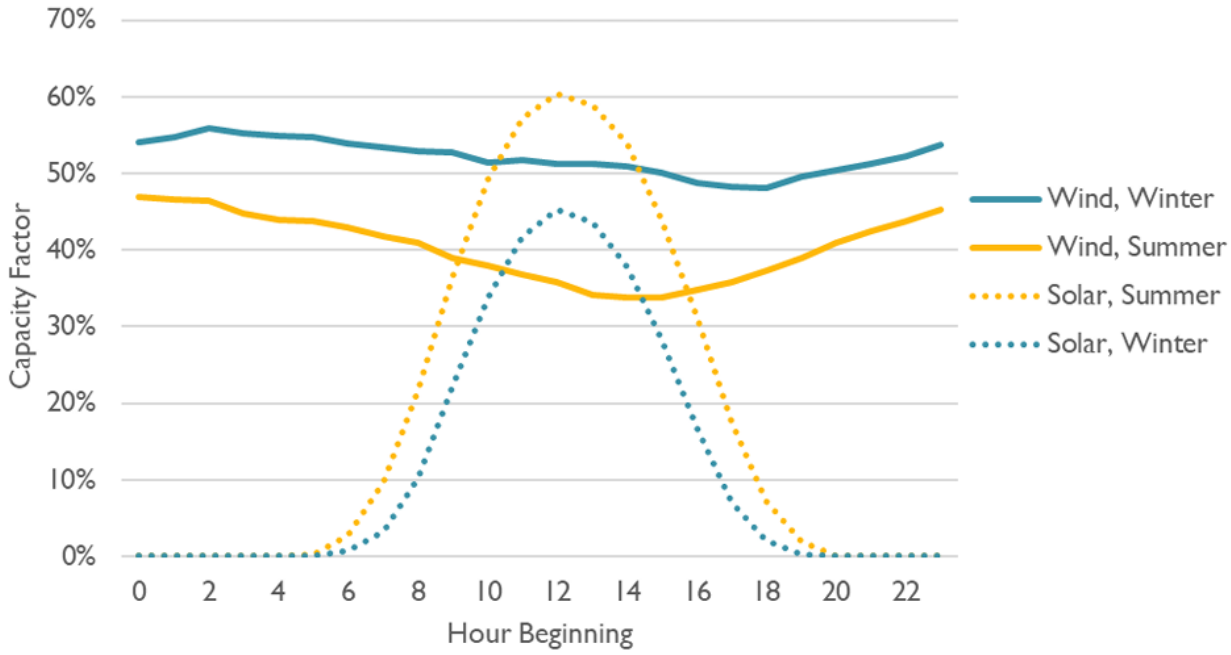
Winter Reliability

Offshore wind plays a key role in improving power reliability during winter when energy demand competes between heating and electricity generation, both of which rely on natural gas. This creates a strain on the energy grid, particularly during extreme cold spells. Offshore wind tends to produce more energy during the winter when it's windier and especially when it's cold, making it a crucial resource during winter peaks, when electricity demand is highest. This is going to be extremely important in about 5-10 years as more people switch their heating from fossil fuels to heat pumps. See this **study by the Union of Concerned Scientists** on how offshore wind could significantly reduce the risk of winter blackouts.

Combatting Climate Change

Offshore wind generates electricity without emitting harmful greenhouse gas emissions. It really is the biggest lever that we can pull to reduce our emissions from the electricity sector and mitigate climate change. We do not see how Rhode Island can achieve the Act on Climate without bringing more offshore wind online.

What About Solar?



Source: Sierra Club & Synapse Energy Economics Inc. ***Charting the Wind Report***

Green Energy Consumers Alliance is proud that Rhode Island has been a leader in solar. While solar is an important part of the renewable energy mix, it cannot meet the amount of power we need on its own. Offshore wind is strongest at night and in fall and winter, while solar shines during the day and produces more during spring and summer months. Together, along with hydro and battery storage, they can provide a balanced energy mix.

Conclusion

Without further procurement of offshore wind, RI risks not only missing our climate goals, but our energy reliability and economic growth goals as well. The reality is that energy demand is increasing, and we need electricity sources to meet that demand. New fossil fuel infrastructure is not politically or economically viable. Solar can't meet it on its own. Offshore wind at scale is the best answer. Werespectfully urge passage of H5816. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Amanda Barker

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