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April 1, 2025

Submitted via email

HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

Re: H.5816. An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Affordable Clean Energy Security Act

The National Wildlife Federation has long advocated for the responsible development of offshore wind energy. We support H.5816, An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Affordable Clean Energy Security Act, and Rhode Island increasing its offshore wind energy procurement target to 1,200 megawatts by 2029.

Offshore wind energy offers many benefits to Rhode Island, such as increasing grid reliability, reducing reliance on volatile fossil fuel prices, creating local jobs and economic growth, improving public health, and meeting climate goals. All of this is possible while simultaneously minimizing impacts on wildlife through responsible siting and development. Particularly at a moment when the federal government is stalling progress, it is more important than ever for states to make clear how important offshore wind energy is to their long-term energy goals.

There are no scenarios to mitigate catastrophic climate change without responsibly-developed offshore wind energy – particularly in the Northeast U.S., where offshore wind is the largest untapped clean energy solution accessible with commercially-available, advanced technology. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, we need 500 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind by 2030 globally to limit warming to 1.5°C and avoid more catastrophic impacts of climate change. Currently, the world has only developed around 81 GW, with the U.S. fleet to date only amounting to about 0.2 GW.

Research shows that climate change is already impacting Rhode Island. According to the Rhode Island Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council's Science and Technical Advisory Board, the state is experiencing rising sea levels, more severe storms and heavy precipitation events, increased risk from coastal storm surge and both coastal and inland flooding, more days over 80°F and health risks from heat and air pollution, increased vulnerability of physical infrastructure, changes to biodiversity, and the acidification and warming of marine waters and subsequent effects on wildlife and fisheries.

We champion the climate benefits of offshore wind energy, and we advocate for policies and actions needed to bring it to scale in an environmentally protective manner. To that end, we are

pleased to see that the bill stipulates that criteria for evaluating offshore wind procurements will include “financial contributions or technical assistance to support research, monitoring and mitigation of impacts to wildlife, fisheries and habitats and the minimization of environmental impacts from the offshore wind power project and related transmission and interconnection infrastructure.” Rhode Island led the nation and provided an invaluable model with the responsible development of the Block Island Wind Farm, and we urge you to maintain this high standard of environmental protection at all stages of Rhode Island’s pursuit of offshore wind energy.

Offshore wind energy can play a critical role in achieving Rhode Island’s goal of reducing emissions 45% by 2030 under the Act on Climate. We strongly urge the Rhode Island House Committee on Corporations to vote in support of H.5816.

Sincerely,

Tara Miller
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