



For a thriving New England

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Via Electronic Mail

May 29, 2024

The Honorable Joseph Solomon
Chair, House Committee on Corporations
House Lounge, State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: CLF **Opposes** House Bills No. 6201, 6202, 6203, and 6204 – Repeal of
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Programs

Dear Chair Solomon:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bills No. 6201, 6202, 6203, and 6204, which as a package would erase the progress Rhode Island has made in reducing energy demand through efficiency investments and shifting to cleaner, more sustainable renewable energy. Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) opposes these bills and encourages each of our elected officials to maintain progress on meeting our state’s obligation to be net-zero by 2050.

CLF is a member-supported non-profit environmental advocacy organization working throughout New England to counter climate change, restore the health of our oceans, embolden new energy infrastructure, and safeguard health, quality of life, and economic prosperity for future generations. We are working to cut emissions from the electricity and heating sectors, and to push for affordable and equitable energy policies in Rhode Island and across New England.

CLF has worked with the General Assembly for the past twenty years to develop and implement policies to conserve energy and transition away from the overreliance on polluting and hazardous fossil fuels. The package of bills in front of you is presented in terms of saving us money today without any thought about how much it will cost us tomorrow or the value that the targeted programs are providing today.

Our energy transition has created new wealth for Rhode Islanders, such as the rooftop and community solar installations that are providing our friends and neighbors with direct payment and bill credits. Energy efficiency investments since 2009 have saved Rhode Islanders \$5.7 billion in energy costs, with only a \$1.9 billion investment.¹ This emerging economy has kept Rhode Island dollars in Rhode Island by buying Rhode Island-generated power and hiring Rhode

¹ R.I. Energy Efficiency Council, *Annual Report* (June 2024), available at <https://eec.ri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EEC-2024-Annual-Report-Final-6-20-24.pdf>.

Island contractors to weatherize our homes. This stands in contrast to shipping our hard-earned money to out-of-state and foreign fossil fuel companies.

House Bill No. 6201

This bill would count energy generated from existing nuclear facilities towards existing requirements to buy energy from new renewable energy resources. This proposal misunderstands and fails to further the purposes of the renewable energy standard. One of the intentions behind our renewable energy standard is to support the construction of new energy-generating facilities. The revenue stream generated by the sale of renewable energy certificates is intended to help capitalize new construction projects. This proposal would divert that funding to existing nuclear generating facilities as a windfall payment. The corporations that own these facilities do not need additional revenue to build a new facility, and Rhode Islanders stand to gain nothing by diverting our ratepayer dollars to them.

House Bill No. 6202

The bill would slam the brakes on programs that are paying Rhode Islanders for the energy that they produce and halt the distribution of federal funds to Rhode Islanders who are investing in more efficient and cost-effective home heating technologies. Many of our neighbors have already invested in building new solar generation facilities at their own expense, and this bill would implement a moratorium that would pull the rug out from under them. They would be left with stranded assets, with their elected officials sending them the message that we no longer want the energy they were prepared to generate. At the same time, our Office of Energy Resources has secured valuable federal dollars to help Rhode Islanders exchange old oil and propane furnaces and install new, more efficient heat pumps. Halting the program now would keep those oil furnaces in place and lock in higher energy payments for Rhode Islanders who want to save money and switch to cleaner, more efficient equipment.

House Bill No. 6203

This bill would wholly eliminate the Renewable Energy Growth program. Just like H-6201, this bill would leave Rhode Islanders who have, in good faith, invested in solar panels and their installation to no longer have a way to sell the power they generate back to the utility for the rest of us to use. This will further constrain our supply of energy, leading to escalating costs for the remaining supply. It will cause some Rhode Islanders to immediately lose the value of thousands of dollars' worth of investment that they cannot get back and force all Rhode Islanders to pay higher energy costs in the future. It may save a few cents on your bill today, but it will add dollars to your bill tomorrow.

House Bill No. 6204

Of all the proposals before you this evening, this is the most irrational. The 2024 Annual Report of the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council shows that for every dollar we put into the energy efficiency fund, three dollars come back to us in the form of lower energy usage and a smaller, more affordable distribution system.² As noted, this has amounted to almost \$6 billion in savings in 14 years. In other words, this program produces incredible value and benefits for the money that we put into it, and to eliminate it would be to throw Rhode Islanders' money away.

In summary, these bills appear not to consider the purposes of the programs being modified or repealed and would raise costs and reduce benefits for Rhode Islanders in the long run. While they nobly seek to reduce high energy bills, they fail to consider the impacts of abruptly repealing programs that are already succeeding at that aim. If the goal is to achieve more affordable energy, slashing programs that have already prevented more drastic increases is not the way to go.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Jamie Rhodes
Senior Attorney, CLF Rhode Island

cc: Members of the House Committee on Corporations
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation

² *Id.*