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From: Richie Walsh <richiewalsh@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2026 8:35 AM
To: House Corporations Committee
Subject: Support of House Bill 7269

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To the Members of the Rhode Island House Corporations Committee:

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 7269, which would allow Rhode Island residents to use small, plug-in solar panel systems without requiring utility interconnection agreements or professional permits. Rhode Island has some of the highest electricity rates in the nation, and families across the state are struggling to keep up with rising energy costs. House Bill 7269 offers a practical, immediate, and low-cost solution. Plug-in solar systems — sometimes called “balcony solar” — are portable, affordable units that homeowners and renters alike can install themselves. They plug into a standard outdoor outlet and immediately begin reducing the electricity a household draws from the grid. Systems typically cost between \$500 and \$1,200, and studies suggest they can pay for themselves within two to three years. This technology is not experimental. Germany alone has deployed over one million such systems, and the European Union has cleared it for use in 25 of its 27 member states. Utah became the first U.S. state to formally authorize plug-in solar in 2025, and Maine followed in April 2026. Virginia has passed similar legislation. Momentum is building rapidly because this issue transcends partisan lines — it saves families money and expands energy independence without costing the state a dollar.

One of the most compelling aspects of H 7269 is its potential to democratize solar energy. Traditional rooftop solar requires homeownership, the right roof orientation, and an upfront investment of \$20,000 or more. Plug-in solar requires none of that. Renters, apartment dwellers, and those on fixed incomes can finally participate in the clean energy transition on their own terms. For Rhode Island to meet its goals under the Act on Climate, we need solutions that work for everyone — not just those with the means and circumstances to install a full rooftop system.

Concerns about grid safety have been addressed by the 2026 launch of the UL 3700 certification standard, which requires automatic power shutoff, ground-fault protection, and weatherproofing. These are safe, well-engineered consumer devices — and H 7269 wisely requires certified products.

I urge you to advance this bill out of committee and support its passage into law. Rhode Islanders deserve every available tool to reduce their energy costs and contribute to a cleaner grid. House Bill 7269 is simple, sensible, and long overdue.

Respectfully,
Richard Walsh
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