

Dear Chair Solomon and members of the House Corporations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H7726, the Solar Cost Reduction Act. I am a resident of Providence, an energy policy analyst, a father, and the co-lead of Climate Action Rhode Island's Yes to Wind Campaign.

Rhode Island has recognized in the Act on Climate that in order to meet the urgency of the climate crisis we must decarbonize our economy. However, we can all agree that we must do so in the most cost-effective path available.

Renewable energy like solar and wind offers the cheapest, fastest path to both decarbonize our current electricity supply and to provide electrons for the electrification of heating, transportation, and industry. However, solar costs - particularly for rooftop and other small- and mid-scale solar - are often much higher than they need to be, due to outdated and dysfunctional policies and structure.

Solar technology is cheap. While prices have swung greatly, in the United States in the last few years, the wholesale cost of a solar panel has typically been between 20-40 cents per watt. Yet the average price of installed residential solar in Q4 2025, according to consultancy Wood Mackenzie, was \$3.40 per watt. Roughly a dollar of this is customer acquisition and origination costs, which are higher due to the complexities of navigating a needless complex system of permitting that was designed well before the widespread adoption of solar.

This legislation, H7726, offers a direct, straightforward, and simply way to reduce solar soft costs, particularly for the residential sector. It does so by creating a statewide solar permitting platform to replace the redundant, byzantine process of municipal permitting. Incidentally, there is already free software (Solar APP+) available that was developed by the US Department of Energy for this purpose.

California, Florida, Maryland, and New Jersey have all taken similar steps to centralize, standardize and automate solar permitting. And SolarAPP+ has already been adopted by over 250 municipalities in 13 states.

This bill is a win-win - by reducing un-necessary permitting, it will save municipalities money. By lowering soft costs, it will save all residents on their future electricity bills. And by making solar cheaper, it can speed the adoption of solar where most state residents want it to be - on rooftops and not in forests that have been cleared.

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