TO: Chair Solomon and members of the House Corporation Committee
Email: HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

CC: Hon. Jennifer Boylan

FROM: Hannah Birnbaum, Chief of Advocacy, Permit Power

RE: Support for H7726

DATE: March 18, 2026

Chair Solomon and honorable members of the House Corporations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H7726 (Boylan). Permit Power is a research and advocacy non-profit on a mission to make it easy, inexpensive, and safe for American families to install solar on their roof and batteries in their garage.

Increasing access to home solar and batteries is an essential part of the solution to Rhode Island's growing energy affordability crisis. Late last year, Rhode Island Electric proposed a rate increase of nearly 5%,[1] adding to the burden families already feel paying some of the highest electricity rates in the country. Going solar provides homeowners with significant savings on utility bills – nearly $1,500 annually in Rhode Island.[2] Deploying more behind the meter solar and batteries also helps *all* ratepayers by reducing the need for expensive peak power purchases and costly grid upgrades.

Unfortunately, red tape at the local level delays and frequently blocks families from installing rooftop solar, and makes doing so more expensive. Roughly 23% of home solar projects that begin the permitting process in Rhode Island are cancelled,[3] and solar installers cite permitting barriers as the biggest reason for the cancellations. The cost of a typical residential solar system in Rhode Island is $28,000,[4] compared to $8,000 in Australia and $10,000 in Germany, which have eliminated permitting red tape.[5] Additionally, the Solar Energy Industries Association estimates that permitting

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[1]Rhode Island Energy, *Rhode Island Energy Files First Comprehensive Rate Review Since 2017 to Support Safe, Reliable, and Affordable Service* (November 26, 2025). URL https://news.pplweb.com/Rhode-Island-Energy-Files-First-Comprehensive-Rate-Review-Since-2017-to-Support-Safe,-Reliable,-and-Affordable-Service

[2] Based on Permit Power implementation of National Laboratory of the Rockies' dGen model, which uses Rhode Island building stock characteristics, weather files, and utility rates to estimate solar savings.

[3] Calculation using data from Ohm Analytics.

[4] Based on $4,381/kW median install cost and 6.5 kW median system size in Rhode Island in 2020, from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's Tracking the Sun dataset. https://emp.lbl.gov/tracking-the-sun

[5] Based on total installed costs of $1,219/kW in Australia and $1,609/kW in Germany in 2020, assuming a 6.5 kW system, from https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2021/Jun/IRENA_Power_Generation_Costs_2020.pdf.

hurdles and related bureaucratic barriers add an additional $6,000-$7,000 to the typical residential solar system in the U.S.[6]

Automated permitting platforms make the approval process for residential solar faster and less resource-intensive. They ask the installer a series of questions to verify the solar system's design is up to code, and then issue permits and corrections in real-time. Eight[7] states, including neighboring New Jersey, have either adopted or promoted automated permitting. Similar legislation is making its way through the Massachusetts and Connecticut legislatures and recently passed the Virginia General Assembly. Automated permitting is also included in the Rhode Island Senate companion bill, S2801.

Automating permitting would bring Rhode Island in line with national best practices and norms. Automated permitting is live in hundreds of jurisdictions, representing roughly one-third of the US residential solar market. Jurisdictions that have adopted automated permitting include Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Oklahoma City.

Importantly, automated permitting platforms are readily available "off the shelf," are free for governments to adopt, and have a proven track record of safety. SolarAPP+ and Symbium– the two most widely utilized platforms– have been successfully implemented by jurisdictions across the country. Such systems are available for immediate use, making them easy to adopt. In fact, these turnkey platforms are so easy to implement that the State of Colorado rapidly adopted both systems pursuant to a recent executive order. Audits of SolarAPP+ have shown that projects permitted through the platform pass inspection at rates comparable to projects that undergo traditional permitting.[8]

The benefits of the policies to streamline permitting have been well documented. For instance, an independent peer reviewed study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that streamlined permitting policies increased new solar installations by 17 percent.[9] Similarly, a recent case study in Arizona showed that, in the two years after Pima County and the city of Tucson switched to SolarAPP+, home solar installations increased at double the rate of the rest of the state.[10]

We ask you to support affordable, clean energy for Rhode Island and help give families back control of their electricity costs by passing this bill.

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[6] Solar Energy Industries Association, Fact Sheet: Solar Soft Costs. June 2019. URL https://seia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Solar-Soft-Costs-Factsheet-1.pdf.
[7] CA, NJ, TX, FL, MD, WA, CO, and MN.
[8] Cook, Jeffrey J., Eric O'Shaughnessy, Kaifeng Xu, Sushmita Jena, Minahil Sana Qasim, and Seth Crew. July 2022. *SolarAPP+ Performance Review: 2021 DataI.* Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP--6A20-83046. URL https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy22osti/83046.pdf.
[9] X. Gao, C. Canfield, T. Tang, H. Hill, M. Higman, & J. Cornwell, Encouraging voluntary government action via a solar-friendly designation program to promote solar energy in the United States, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A*. 119 (11) e2106201119, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2106201119 (2022).
[10] Permit Power. May 2024. *Case Study: Automated Permitting Leads to More Rooftop Solar in Tucson and Pima County*. URL https://static1.squarespace.com/static/65fc4240ae5c65566a78e479/t/663cdbad1ef7fc0c3b74daf3/1715264430020/Permit+Power+Case+Study.pdf.