



March 19, 2026

Hon. Joseph Solomon
Chairperson
House Committee on Corporations
HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: **HB 7879; An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Thermal Energy Network and Job Act**

Dear Chair Solomon,

BuildRI is a domestic non-profit trade association comprised of four (4) contractor associations (the Labor Relations Division of the RI Chapter of the Associated General Contractors, the New England Mechanical Contractors' Ass'n, the RI Mason Contractors' Ass'n, and the RI and Southeast MA Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors' Ass'n), and seventeen (17) Local Trade Unions comprised of approximately 10,000 local tradesmen and women. On behalf of BuildRI, and our partners, we are in support of HB 7879.

Thermal energy networks present an important opportunity to support a just transition not only for our energy consumption needs, but for the men and women who build Rhode Island's energy infrastructure. This legislation takes a first step by directing the utility to identify and study where thermal energy networks can be deployed across Rhode Island. Ideally, these studies will focus on communities that have historically faced high energy costs and greater exposure to pollution.

Buildings remain one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in our state. The underground thermal energy network systems are extremely efficient: they can serve multiple buildings, provide reliable heating and cooling, and do so without placing additional strain on the electric grid. By sharing energy across connected buildings, and using the stable temperatures underground, thermal networks can deliver locally sourced, dependable energy while helping reduce peak demand on the grid.

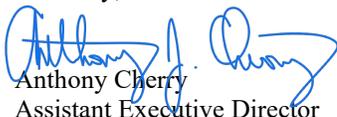
Conducting feasibility studies now will help identify the most promising locations for projects across a variety of building types and neighborhoods, build a "pipeline" of projects that the state can advance when investment opportunities arise.

Thermal energy networks also support a worker-centered clean energy transition. Designing, constructing, and maintaining these systems relies on many of the same skills currently held by Rhode Island's legacy energy workforce, meaning our workers can easily transition into this work. As the state transitions its energy systems, thermal energy networks offer a pathway that protects existing workers while expanding access to high-quality, family-sustaining careers. These project opportunities also provide our employers with viable options for future small business investments.

Thermal energy networks represent a meaningful opportunity to reduce emissions, create good paying jobs while supporting our legacy fuel workers, and build a pipeline of projects to support a just transition not only for our trades men and women, but for all energy consumers across Rhode Island.

Thank you for your attention to this correspondence. Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Anthony Cherry
Assistant Executive Director