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Via Electronic Mail

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chair, House Corporations Committee
House Lounge, State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: CLF **Supports** House Bill No. 7879 – Thermal Energy Network and Job Act of 2026

Dear Chair Solomon:

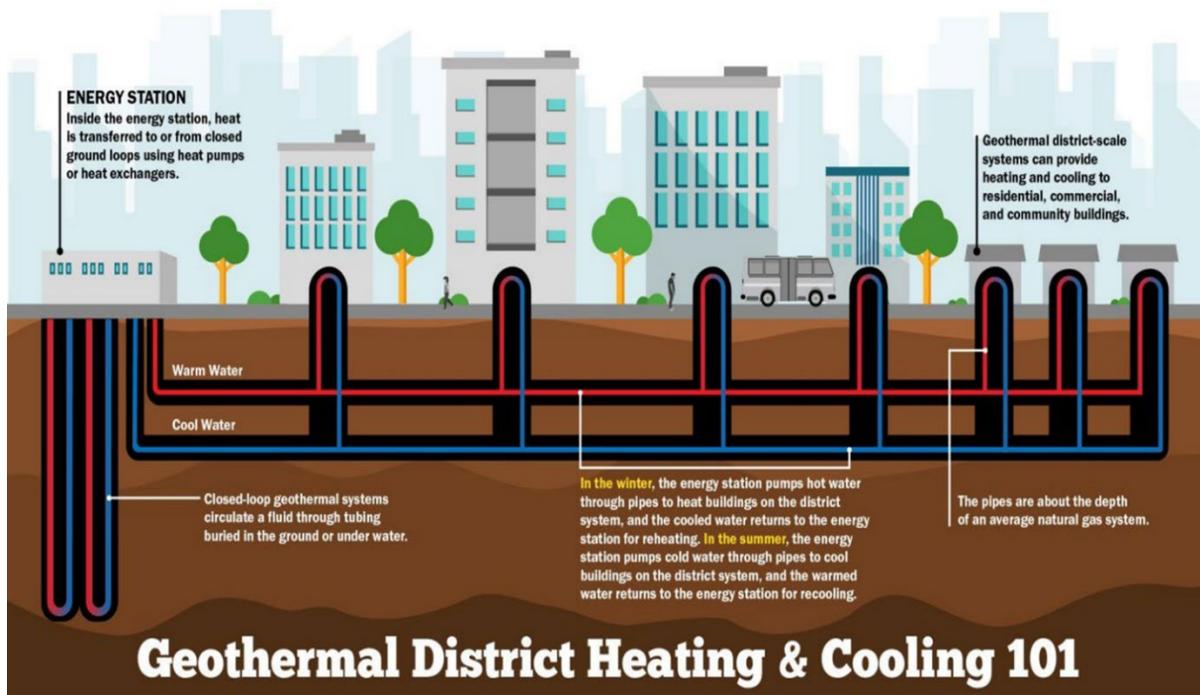
The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 7879 – the Thermal Energy Network and Job Act (“TEN Job Act”). The TEN Job Act facilitates the study of thermal energy networks (“TEN”) to determine if the implementation of TENs in Rhode Island has the potential to contribute to the satisfaction of the greenhouse gas (“GHG”) reduction and just-transition requirements of Rhode Island’s Act on Climate¹ while potentially offering reduced operating costs and decreased costs of future expansion.

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 reduce emissions, address the climate crisis, and push for affordable and equitable energy policies in Rhode Island and across New England.

CLF emphatically supports the passage of H-7879.

Thermal energy (which literally exists under the very ground we walk on) offers a free, plentiful, renewable, non-intermittent source of energy with the potential to substantially reduce GHG emissions in Rhode Island and provide a just transition for well-trained, experienced, Rhode Island union employees.

¹ 2021 Act on Climate, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-6.2-2.



Source: World Resources Institute

Our neighboring state of Massachusetts is already several steps ahead of Rhode Island in harnessing non-polluting, abundant thermal energy:

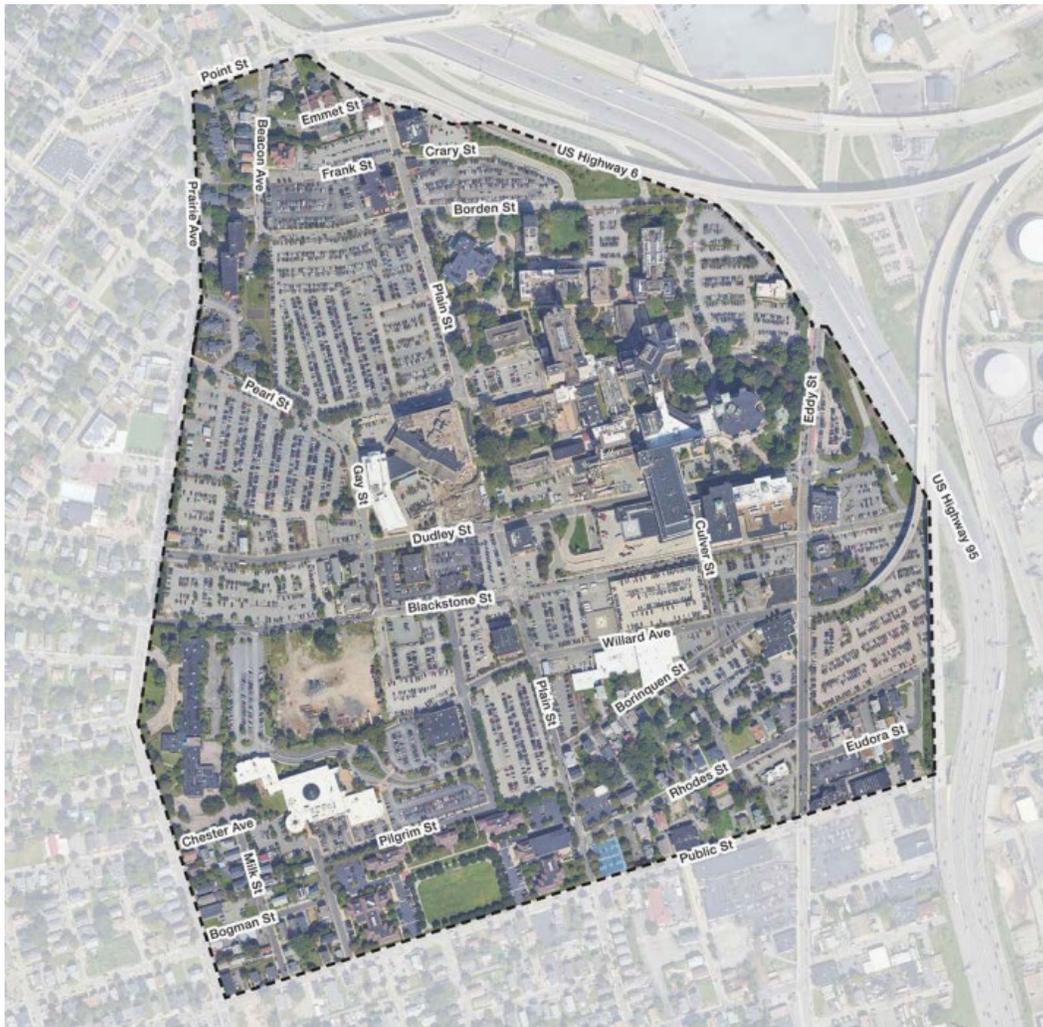
- In 2024, the non-profit Home Energy Efficiency Team, Inc. (“HEET”) in conjunction with the State of Massachusetts, the Town of Framingham, and Eversource completed a geothermal energy network in Framingham that included the retrofit of a large, multi-unit, affordable housing complex operated by the Framingham Housing Authority.²
- On September 17, 2025, NSTAR Gas Company d/b/a Eversource Energy (“Company” or “NSTAR Gas”) filed with the Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) a petition for approval of a regulatory framework for networked geothermal services. *See* D.P.U. 25-86. “More specifically, the Petition seeks “to establish a decisional platform to enable the Department’s consideration of networked geothermal services that would be extended to new construction projects in the Company’s service territory, such as new residential housing developments or other larger-scale developments with energy needs that would be suited to a network solution other than natural gas distribution service.”³

² Geothermal Pilot Reference Guide, <https://www.eversource.com/residential/save-money-energy/clean-energy-options/geothermal-energy/geothermal-pilot-reference-guide> (last accessed Mar. 11, 2026).

³ Petition to Intervene of Home Energy Efficiency Team, Inc., February 17, 2026; <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/V3.1.0/FileService.Api/file//aeieghfe?>

In Rhode Island, CLF is currently actively promoting the 132-acre Providence Hospital District (“District”) located at the center of the one of the largest environmental justice communities in Providence, Rhode Island as an ideal location for the development of TENs to advance the growth of low cost, low GHG emitting housing, institutional, and commercial development in the District. CLF has recently begun to collaborate with HEET on this initiative.

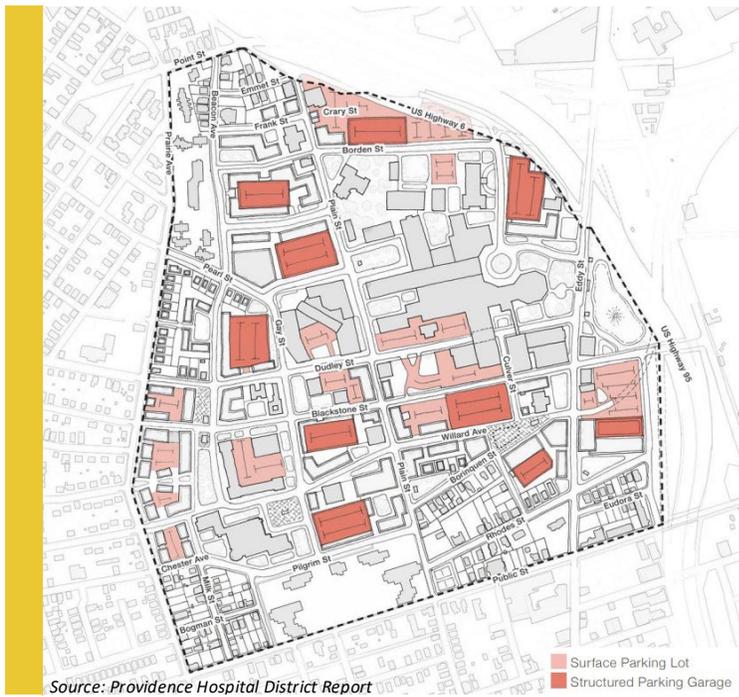
The District spans approximately 132 acres with an estimated 41 acres—roughly 31% of total land area—currently occupied by surface parking lots.



Providence Hospital District – Current Conditions⁴

⁴ Providence Hospital District, *A Vision for Healing, Housing, and Mobility in South Providence* 12; <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PVD-Hospital-District-CNU-Legacy-Project-Report-2025-06-17.pdf>.

The City of Providence’s goal for the District is to establish a shared vision for the redevelopment of underutilized land in the District to reconnect the area with the south side of Providence, unlock community development and economic opportunity, substantially increase public housing (conservative buildout estimates indicate the District's surface lots have the development capacity for over 2,000 housing units) and improve public and environmental health. This is an opportunity to pursue pipe-based, decarbonized energy in an area already undergoing infrastructure changes.



- Providence Hospital District Master Plan and Brown University Health Institutional Master Plan
- Both propose new infrastructure and zoning changes in and around RI Hospital in South Providence

Robust support by Rhode Island Energy with professional regulation and oversight by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission are essential to the wide-spread adoption of TENs in Rhode Island. H-7879 sets forth a bold, but well-disciplined, prudent, and low-cost path to reach this goal. Due to a change in the federal administration and current world events and instability, alternative, viable, energy alternatives must be aggressively pursued now. Time is of the essence.

We therefore ask that you pass House Bill No. 7879.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

⁵ *Id.* at 28

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Stang
Senior Attorney, Rhode Island
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the House Committee on Corporations
Representative Terri Cortvriend
Representative Arthur Handy
Representative Jennifer Boylan
Representative Michelle McGaw
Representative John Edwards
Darrèll Brown, Vice President, Rhode Island, Conservation Law Foundation