

April 6, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.  
Chairman, House Corporations Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

**RE: H-7880 – Relating to Public Utilities & Carriers – Percentage of Income Payment Program**

Dear Chairman Solomon:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write regarding H-7880, which would authorize the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to approve a tiered percentage of income payment program (PIPP) for electric and natural gas customers. **Our Company is committed to working with policymakers, regulators, and other valued stakeholders to explore viable policy and regulatory pathways that support energy affordability for all customers. In fact, we recently proposed a revised low-income discount rate proposal that is built on PIPP principles; that proposal is now being reviewed by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).**

Rhode Island Energy provides essential energy services to more than 770,000 customers across the state through the delivery of electricity and natural gas. Our team of 1,300+ union and non-union employees is dedicated to helping Rhode Island customers and communities thrive, while supporting the transition to a cleaner energy future in a safe, reliable, and affordable manner.

Rhode Island Energy appreciates the leadership shown by Deputy Majority Leader Slater and community advocates in seeking ways to help utility customers better manage their energy cost burdens. This is a value important to Rhode Island Energy, too. Today, **Rhode Island Energy supports its customers through several assistance programs, including: 25-30% bill discounts for qualified customers, an Arrears Management Program, budget and balanced billing, LIHEAP Enhancement Fund grants, and energy efficiency services offered at no-cost for qualified customers.**<sup>1</sup> We also connect our customers to other federal, state, and community-run programs that offer direct utility bill relief. This suite of offerings, along with other available assistance opportunities, are intended to increase energy affordability for those customers who need it most.<sup>2</sup>

**While these affordability measures are important, they do come at a cost. And, those costs are ultimately recovered through utility rates paid by non-participating customers. Thus, any change to existing rate structures must be mindful not only of our most vulnerable customers, but of all other utility customers, too.** For example, the existing 25-30% bill discount for qualified electric customers cost \$15.8 million in 2024, while the Arrearage Management Program cost more than \$900,000. The Company's energy efficiency programs for income-eligible customers were budgeted for \$14.4 million in 2025.<sup>3</sup> Also, Rhode Island General Laws require Rhode Island Energy to collect an additional \$7.5 million annually from its customers to support the LIHEAP

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<sup>1</sup> For information on available assistance programs, visit: [www.rienergy.com/site/ways-to-save/assistance-programs](http://www.rienergy.com/site/ways-to-save/assistance-programs).

<sup>2</sup> Rhode Island Energy also hosts Customer Assistance Expos in local communities, which provide a "one-stop shop" for customers seeking utility and other types of assistance from partner organizations, such as the United Way and DHS.

<sup>3</sup> [Low Income Discounts and Funding Sources – August 2025](#). Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities & Carriers.

Enhancement Program.<sup>4</sup> The costs of these programs are ultimately collected in rates paid by non-participating customers.

**Recently, Rhode Island Energy proposed a revised low-income discount rate proposal (LIDR+), now under review by the PUC. LIDR+ was designed to help the most vulnerable families afford their energy bills by increasing discounts for those who need them most – while keeping costs fair for everyone.**

As proposed, **LIDR+ would offer discounts of up to 60% for qualified customers with the lowest income levels, ensuring that more support goes to helping those who need it most.** Discounts are based on a customer's household income compared to federal guidelines. It also offers streamlined enrollment, i.e., a customer already receiving assistance from programs like LIHEAP, SNAP, Medicaid, or Rhode Island Works would be eligible. And, Rhode Island Energy's proposal mitigates cost impacts on non-participating customers ultimately subsidizing that assistance. In short, **LIDR+ will help keep costs stable for all customers, use proven verification methods, and ensure the most vulnerable households receive the greatest help – without adding significant costs for others.** As noted, this proposal is now under review by the PUC as part of our rate review process; if approved, the new discounts could start in early 2027. We will notify all customers of any changes a few months before they go into effect.

Rhode Island Energy looks forward to working with the bill's sponsors, utility regulators, and other stakeholders on these and other important matters in the weeks ahead.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,



Nicholas S. Ucci  
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee  
The Honorable Scott A. Slater, Rhode Island House of Representatives

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<sup>4</sup> R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-1-27.12.