

2026 H-7890
PUC
Seeking clarification



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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Public Utilities Commission

Chairman Ronald T. Gerwatowski
Commissioner Abigail Anthony
Commissioner Karen Bradbury

April 28, 2026

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

Re: House Bill 7890 – The Equitable Participation in Utility Regulation Act

Dear Chair Solomon:

I am submitting the following comments on behalf of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on House Bill 7890, which creates an intervenor compensation fund to be administered by the PUC. This is the second year for this type of bill and this year's version has been refined and appears responsive to several of the concerns raised by the PUC last year. However, the PUC offers observations and suggestions for clarity and practicality.¹

First, referencing page 2, lines 24-26, the PUC questions whether the sponsors intended to expand the scope of applicability to the energy efficiency filings of Clear River Electric and Water District (CREW) and Block Island Utility District (BIUD) or whether the specific reference to energy efficiency filings was a placeholder in case Rhode Island Energy were to no longer administer their energy efficiency program.² This section should be clarified.

Second, the PUC suggests that the applicability of this same section of the bill (page 2, lines 24-26) not apply to cases that are initiated to reconcile actual costs against forecasts pursuant to previously approved tariffs. These cases are designed to primarily be math exercises with expedited schedules typically ranging from 60-75 days. The way an over-recovery is returned to customers or an under-recovery collected from customers can be just as effectively advocated for through public comment as it can through party status.

¹ If the sponsor wishes to pursue any amendments, the PUC would be pleased to offer specific language. The suggestions would also apply to the sections of the bill applying to the Energy Facility Siting Board.

² The total annual budget for CREW is less than \$210,000 while BIUD's is less than \$95,000.

Third, the PUC is concerned with granting party status to “an individual person on behalf of an unorganized group or individual persons.” (Page 3, lines 5-6). The PUC typically requires such “unorganized groups” to still include a fixed “membership” type list by a certain date and further, that an attorney represent the group to avoid the inadvertent unauthorized practice of law.

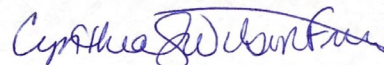
Fourth, the PUC seeks to clarify that the intent of the bill is to annually cap the intervenor compensation fund at \$400,000 composed of a \$300,000 appropriation from the State’s General Revenue Fund and up to \$100,000 of ratepayer funds if the appropriation is insufficient that year. The PUC recommends against the use of ratepayer funds at this time because any additional ratepayer funding would put upward pressure on rates.

Fifth, where the grant is for a fixed up-front amount, regardless of the needs of the party, the PUC seeks to clarify the sponsor’s intent when there are insufficient funds to meet the needs of all qualifying parties. The PUC recommends against the use of ratepayer funds at this time because any additional ratepayer funding would put upward pressure on rates.

Finally, the PUC would like to seek clarity on the “significant financial hardship” standard, particularly as it pertains to an organized non-profit organization.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 401-780-2147 or cynthia.wilsonfrias@puc.ri.gov.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Wilson-Frias
Chief of Legal Services

Copy: Representative Stewart