



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

DIVISION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES & CARRIERS

Administration
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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman – House Committee on Corporations
State House
Providence, R.I. 02903

Re: **H 7890 – The Equitable Participation in Utility Regulation Act**

Dear Chairman Solomon:

The Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (“Division”) thanks you and the Committee for the opportunity to submit this letter of concern in response to House Bill No. 7890. Serving as the advocate for utility ratepayers statewide, the Division understands the critical importance of robust engagement in hearings before the Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”).

However, the proposed bill would duplicate an already transparent and accessible open meeting and public comment process provided by the Commission. The Division opposed a similar measure during last year’s legislative session, that called for funding the new intervention process on the backs of utility ratepayers. This year, House Bill No. 7890 instead contemplates funding an unnecessary process with General Fund revenue (although ratepayers would be on the hook nonetheless if there is a shortfall).

Although the Division welcomes additional ratepayer advocacy, creating this new process and funding mechanism at a time when Rhode Island ratepayers are already struggling to afford high utility bills is unnecessary. Simply put, there already exists a highly effective public engagement process in utility ratemaking and this measure would needlessly convolute that process – at considerable cost.

Additionally, the Division is concerned that for-profit entities — potentially with interests directly opposed to ratepayers — may receive compensation as eligible intervenors. The Division cannot support *any* proposal that could allow for-profit entities or any other party with interests in opposition to our ratepayers to be compensated for their efforts, by a special fund capitalized by state tax dollars.

The Division questions the reasonableness and wisdom of state dollars being used to provide grants “designed to offset legal fees, expert witness fees, and other reasonable costs” of unnecessary intervention before the Commission, as provided at the bottom of Page 2 of the bill. Moreover, the Division has grave concerns about the propriety of granting intervenor status to an “individual person on behalf of an unorganized group or individual persons,” as set forth in lines 3-5 on Page 3.

The Division appreciates the opportunity to share these concerns with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda George". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda George, Esq.
Administrator, RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers

CC: The Honorable Jennifer Steward
The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Corporations
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel