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May 12, 2026

Testimony neither in support or opposition to H8519: The Renewable Energy Standard

House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Chairman Soloman and Committee Members,

I am writing as the executive director of Climate Action RI and a lifelong Rhode Islander. CARI is the largest grassroots organization of Rhode Islanders dedicated to the just transition to clean, affordable renewable energy.

Our topline position is that there is no reason at this time and under these circumstances to make any changes to the Renewable Energy Standard (RES). This statute is being implemented as planned and is providing Rhode Islanders and others in the New England area with multiple benefits far exceeding the current costs including reducing peak demand which reduces energy costs, reducing the health impacts of burning fossil fuels, and supporting the local economy and well paying jobs.

Our position does not mean we believe that the RES should never be amended, as any statute can be improved over time, but that this should only be done with careful deliberation and with accurate, comprehensive, and transparent data and modeling. H8519 is a corrective to the drastic and dishonest budget proposal cynically put forth by our Governor to gain electoral advantage for a struggling campaign. Our preference would be for no changes to be made in this rushed and not fully informed manner.

The Renewable Energy Standard has the two intertwined goals of moving our electric supply to 100% clean sources and providing clear and steadily growing financial incentives for the deployment of additional sources of renewable energy to the New England grid.

The RES achieves that second goal by giving incentives payments called Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to providers of clean, renewable energy. With this bill, up to 20% of those incentive payments will be redirected from new power sources to existing nuclear and hydro power resources, which don't need incentives since they already exist! Although our state can technically achieve a 100% carbon-free electricity supply by 2033 by this statute, it will do so with fewer new sources of renewable energy than with the current law. This represents a missed opportunity to reduce our dependency on volatile and increasingly expensive fossil fuels and to move expeditiously to the affordable clean energy sources of the future.

One other concern we have is how the comprehensive review of the RES will be created. We strongly believe that a quality review of the RES and related energy markets would provide the information necessary to make informed adjustments to the RES, as needed. H8519 calls for such a

report to be created by the OER and the PUC by or before January 1, 2030. We think this is inadequate and will not guarantee the creation of a report that can be confidently relied on to make informed decisions. There needs to be more detail on the parameters and safeguards to its accuracy, thoroughness, and especially the transparency of whatever modeling is done, which has been a clear shortfall in the modeling created to support the Governor's budget proposal. We would propose hiring an independent and experienced firm to do this analysis.

We know that Representative Carson is dedicated to addressing the climate crisis and we know she spent long hours talking to a wide range of stakeholders, including myself and other members of CARI, and carefully considered the breadth of perspectives she was given and that she had to struggle with being told conflicting representations of the facts on the ground. We also know Rep. Carson had to consider the political moment, an election year, when the Governor is running a campaign falsely claiming that the only way to reduce utility bills is to reduce support for energy efficiency and renewable energy. We are, however, relieved to see that H8519 preserves both the annual stepwise increase in the proportion of electric generation that comes from zero-carbon sources and the end goal of reaching 100% in 2033.

Despite our respect for the effort that Rep. Carson has put into this legislation, we cannot fully support this bill as it still reduces incentives for the rapid deployment of renewable energy and therefore is not in the best interest of Rhode Islanders.

In conclusion, although our preference is that there were no changes made to the RES this year, this bill, despite its shortcomings, is a clear bulwark against the destructive plan put forth in the Governor's budget proposal.

Respectively yours,

Jeff Migneault
Executive Director
Climate Action Rhode Island