

Testimony of Peter Trafton
On Behalf of Citizens Climate Lobby – Rhode Island
In Support of H 7275 – The Climate Literacy Act
House Committee on Education, Wednesday Feb. 16, 2022

Dear Chair McNamara and Committee Members,

Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy climate change organization focused on national policies to address climate change. We're committed to building political will for the climate solutions we all need.

We recognize, along with thousands of climate scientists that global warming is caused by greenhouse gases emitted by burning carbon-based fossil fuels for energy and heat. The resulting impacts on our environment will become devastating, and they are already being felt in Rhode Island –increasing heat, sea level rise, severe weather events, public health issues, and serious threats to our economy, etc.

After years of studies and discussion, Rhode Island's leaders are beginning to act on climate, according to the law of that name passed last spring. Our responses must be far-reaching and involve every Rhode Islander. It is thus vital that we all be prepared with knowledge and skills necessary to uphold our legislative commitments and salvage our environment and economy.

The climate literacy act – H7275 sponsored by Representative Cortvriend - will help the schools of Rhode Island develop the educational tools necessary so every young Rhode Islander can learn about climate change and respond to it, with awareness of the challenges, as well as the opportunities, particularly regarding our transition to a decarbonized green environment.

The climate literacy act does not require yet another new curriculum to be created and somehow squeezed into everything that must be taught and learned – parts of which seem to be added by the General Assembly almost every year. Instead, consistent with climate change affecting us all in many ways, the climate literacy act requires development of principles and examples that can be integrated into other parts of the curriculum and reach every student.

Our daughter, an experienced middle school science teacher, believes that this approach will be helpful and supportive rather than overwhelming already overburdened teachers.

Rhode Island's Environmental Education Association has already contributed significantly to environmental education tools for our teachers and students. They stand ready to assist with development of similar materials for climate change education – which is supported by the majority of Rhode Island parents, teachers, and students.

Our young people are becoming progressively overwhelmed with anxiety and depression because of what they have heard about climate change. Education will help them recognize that there is hope for a durable successful and resilient outcome, and that they can be a part of it.

Because of the many ways that climate literacy will benefit Rhode Island and its residents, please support H7275 the 2022 climate literacy act.

Thank you very much for considering and supporting this important measure.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Trafton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter Trafton, MD
For Citizens Climate Lobby – Rhode Island