

March 20, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman, House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

RE: H-7022 – An Act Relating to Waters & Navigation – Act on Coasts – Coastal Resiliency

Dear Chairman Bennett:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write in **support** of H-7022, which would require a statewide “coastal resilience plan that recommends a specific long-term and short-term strategy for climate change resilience and adaptation in the coastal areas of the state.”

Rhode Island Energy provides essential energy services to over 770,000 customers across the Ocean State through the delivery of electricity or 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.

H-7022 defines components to be included in the state’s coastal resilience plan, such as a vulnerability assessment of coastal communities that incorporates “physical, economic, and social vulnerabilities.”¹ Rhode Island Energy agrees with this approach, however, it is not clear whether “physical” vulnerabilities include critical and non-critical energy infrastructure or is intended to be narrower in scope (e.g., pertaining only to private property). Respectfully, we suggest amending this section to include specific reference to representative types of vulnerabilities that should be considered in the state’s coastal resilience plan, including energy and other public utility infrastructure. This addition may provide clarity to advisory board members and stakeholders engaged in this important work.²

Also, this legislation would establish a fourteen-member advisory board to advise the state’s Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) “on all matters including plans, programs, strategies and make recommendations for adaptation on resilience in urban, coastal and riverine environments.”³ It calls for consideration of appointees with various qualifications, such as expertise in insurance, flood management, land use planning, riverine geology, and real estate. Rhode Island Energy respectfully suggests that the advisory board may also benefit from having a member with specific expertise in “utility infrastructure,” and recommends that language be added to include this in the list of professionals considered for membership.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation.

¹ Page 3, lines 9-11.

² Similarly, the Committee may wish to consider adding “public utility infrastructure” to the types of investments described in §46-23.4-3(a)(2) on page 3, lines 12-15.

³ Page 3, lines 31-34 through page 4, lines 1-5.

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Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "NSU", written over a light blue circular background.

Nicholas S. Ucci
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Environment & Natural Resources Committee