

RI House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

March 21, 2024

RE: H7617 AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- BUILDING
DECARBONIZATION ACT OF 2024

Dear Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

Our firm writes in support of H7617. This bill engages the Office of Energy Resources to fulfill on Rhode Island's commitment to lead by example in ushering in a clean energy future.

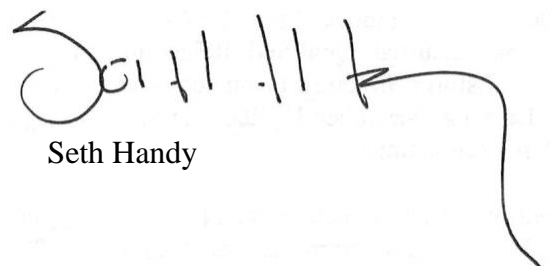
In 2017, as a follow on to the development of our state energy plan, Energy 2035, RI OER did its own study and report on the impacts of converting our fossil fuel thermal systems to the alternatives. Rhode Island Renewable Thermal Market Development Strategy, Meister Consultant Group (Jan. 2017). <https://energy.ri.gov/resources/resource-library/rhode-island-renewable-thermal-market-development-strategy>. That report concluded that transitioning even just 5% of our thermal systems off of gas can generate over \$193 million in lifetime net benefits. pp. 4-5. It found that a renewable thermal scale-up would lead to significant emissions benefits in Rhode Island, avoiding 2.2 million tons CO2e over the life of a program that meets 5% of the state's RT load, or an average of more than 60 thousand tons per year over the life of the measures. p. 5. Such a program would also drive a strong increase in Rhode Island jobs, leading to a net increase of 165 jobs on average from 2017 to 2055. At the program's peak, it would have an impact of more than 500 jobs. p. 5 The report built on Energy 2035's recommendations to enhance energy security by diversification, finding that "Increasing the use of RT [renewable thermal] technologies will lead to an increase in fuel diversity across the thermal energy sector, helping to reduce Rhode Island's vulnerability to disruptions in energy infrastructure, increase consumer choice, and synergize with the increasing deployment of distributed renewable electricity generation (e.g. electric heat pumps)." p. 10.

Despite OER's funded study and its strongly supportive findings and recommendations, little of the contemplated transition has happened to date. We support H7617 as a mandate to transition to these more affordable, secure and cleaner thermal energy systems.

Existing buildings consume a substantial percentage of our state's energy—estimated by the Department of Environmental Management at nearly 30%—and are responsible for a corresponding amount of our greenhouse gas emissions. Benchmarking the energy consumption of large buildings will facilitate a targeted reduction and move successfully toward our 2050 goals.

Please pass H7617. Thank you for your great leadership on this and your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Seth Handy