

Testimony in support of H7617: Building Decarbonization Act of 2024

George Voutes, 17 Shore Road, Bristol RI, 02809

Date of Hearing: March 21, 2024

To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Residential and commercial buildings generate about 30% of greenhouse gas emissions in Rhode Island. These emissions have to be brought down to net-zero by 2050, as required by our Act on Climate in order to help limit global heating to temperatures that will still sustain life. The urgent need to reduce emissions applies to both, existing buildings and new construction. 70% of buildings are expected to be still in use in the year 2050 and have already been built. It will be impossible to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 by continuing to burn fossil fuels in these buildings to heat, make hot water, dry clothes and cook. The obvious solution is to convert these buildings as soon as possible, using only electric energy.

The technology exists today with electric heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, heat pump/electric clothes dryers, and induction stoves. This technology will be largely greenhouse gas pollution free and is much more energy efficient to operate. This technology creates healthier indoor environments and is already less expensive than fossil fuels over its lifetime of the equipment. It is counterproductive to continue to build new buildings and still use fossil fuel based technology instead of requiring an all-electric design. Why would anyone lock owners of new buildings into a polluting, more expensive fossil-fuel based technology, while clean and less expensive alternatives exist?

I fully support H7617 because it provides a well-designed policy and a detailed process and requirements to significantly reduce and ultimately eliminate greenhouse gas pollution from the building sector - within realistic time frames.

Please bring the bill to a vote in 2024 and let make this law. The time is now to act! Future generations will thank you for leading this urgent transition away from fossil fuel building technology.

Thank you for considering my testimony and thank you to Representative Kislak for introducing this important bill.