



Director's Office

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | (401) 222-2280

Jonathan Womer, Director

February 27, 2025

The Honorable Representative David Bennett
Chairperson, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill No. 5343 – An Act Relating to Public Property and Works – State Purchases - Lead By Example Act

Dear Chairperson Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Division of Capital Asset, Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) and the Division of Purchases (Purchases) the opportunity to submit comments in response to House Bill No. 5343, which proposes new amendments to the Lead By Example Act.

The Department intends to reach or exceed the goals of the Governor's Executive Order that pertain to ZEVs and charging stations. Partnering with the Office of Energy Resources (OER), the Department is on track to bring 200 charging stations online by 2030. Furthermore, as of early 2025, the State fleet is on track to meeting the Executive Order goal of ensuring that 25% of the light-duty State fleet are ZEVs by 2030. This goal is ambitious due to budget constraints and agency operating requirements. State agencies strive to procure electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles; however, as this legislation recognizes, there has been a limited supply of EVs. When there is inadequate supply of ZEVs, or models that do not meet agency need, the agency assesses if a hybrid will satisfy their requirements. If none is available or suitable, State fleet requires a waiver for an agency to procure a gas-powered vehicle. Continued work on the centralization of state fleet operations will help further accelerate our ability to meet our climate change goals. State Fleet Operations tracks our ZEV procurement in the annual State Fleet Operations report issued every January.

DCAMM works closely with OER and the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) to reach the energy efficiency goals for State properties, as set by § 32-2-85. However, electrifying State facilities is a process that will take time and significant funding. In addition to the costs associated with transitioning existing systems, new technologies must be integrated in buildings of varying ages and conditions. Technological advancements required to make such a transition feasible are still evolving, and the State must consider the readiness and scalability of these technologies to take the most responsible approach. The targets proposed in this bill are not achievable due to current logistical, operational, and financial gaps; however, the Governor's budget proposal on decarbonization represents an achievable process to transition buildings to more energy efficient sources over time, and therein achieve a reduction in emissions.



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Finally, several aspects of this bill may impose challenges to contracting with existing or future vendors and could come with significant financial impacts to the state:

- State purchasing ban on plastic bottles and wholesale move to require biodegradable and compostable materials will likely have a significant impact on existing contracts and agency budgets.
- The introduction of a recycling and composting program at all State facilities represents an extension of our existing practices. Most large state buildings offer recycling in offices and cafeterias. However, the broad reference to “all state facilities” implies that state-run group homes or small, unoccupied facilities would require a recycling program and a composting contract. Specifically contracting with a vendor to conduct composting at every qualifying state facility could result in services at hundreds of disparate facilities, resulting in significant annual costs.
- Requiring certified environmental custodians and prohibiting the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, as outlined in § 37-8-4.1 and § 42-17.1-46, respectively, may limit the state’s ability to hire custodial or landscaping services by reducing the competition of prospective vendors, which could increase costs.

The Divisions appreciates the opportunity to share our comments regarding this legislation with the Committee. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact either office at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Marco Schiappa
Acting Director
Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance



Jay Hauser
State of Rhode Island Purchasing Agent
Division of Purchases

cc: The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Louis Mansolillo, Clerk
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House