

Strong Support for H-5493 (Building Decarbonization)

Dear Chairman Bennet and members of the committee:

I want to focus my testimony on a single word: urgency.

When dealing with our climate crisis, it can seem like we have time. But we don't.

That's because climate change is more like a supertanker than a speedboat. It has enormous momentum, and once it gets moving, it takes a great effort to change its course. It may seem like those rocks are a long way off, but our ship is going to plow straight ahead for a long time after we turn the wheel, so if we don't start now, we going to plow straight ahead into destruction.

So it's imperative that we stop talking about the Act on Climate and start making it work.

We've been congratulating ourselves long enough for the Act's grand aspirations. The fact is, we aren't meeting them. That's because we have no urgency: We can turn the wheel next year, do another study, delay action while we address more immediate issues. But if we hit those rocks, there won't be any other issues.

Building decarbonization our best single action to begin this work.

Nearly 50 percent of all carbon emissions in Rhode Island come from the building sector. Benchmarking is the first step in addressing that huge source of pollution.

I am pleased that—unlike the 10-year timeline proposed by EC4—this bill:

- * includes both public and private large buildings
- * sets a reasonable timeline for both benchmarking and carbon reduction standards.
- * requires electric-ready new construction.

However, I want to emphasize that “electric-ready” is not good enough. It's just kicking the can down the road—and making future improvements more difficult and more expensive.

The fact that Providence has already devised and tested a benchmarking process should streamline that same process for both the state and it's municipalities. Providence has completed benchmarking on large public buildings and will

complete the process for private buildings by the end of the year. So the timeline proposed in this bill is far more reasonable than that recommended in the EC4 report.

I'm sure we are all aware that we are now living under a federal government that is openly hostile to clean energy and the environment in general. So it's more important than ever for states to take up the challenge. Our children's future and the economic health of our state depend on it.

By passing this bill, we will finally start steering the ship away from the reefs. Let's hope we haven't waited too long.

Bill Ibelle
Providence