

Testimony in **Support of H 5493**

Building Benchmarking and Building Performance Standards

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Dear Chair Bennett and the Honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Dr. Carolyn Shumway. I am a resident of Cumberland, RI, and a member of the RI Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby (RICCL). I am writing in strong support of H5493 the Building Decarbonization Act of 2025. First Vice-chair of this committee, Honorable Bob Phillips, is my representative.

This bill is an important step for Rhode Island to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve the Act on Climate. Buildings make up over 1/3 of all greenhouse gas emissions in our state. If we want to meet the Act on Climate, we *must* reduce emissions from buildings.

We hope that this bill and the corresponding S0091 building benchmarking will be passed this legislative session, the third year that it has been submitted. These two bills achieve the following:

**Section 1: Improve Building Benchmarking & Performance.** This section of the bills requires large buildings to report their energy usage to the state. The benchmarking of building performance is a necessary and critical step in addressing emissions from large existing buildings. Three years after collecting the data, the Office of Energy Resources must establish emissions reductions standards in line with the Act on Climate. Because Rhode Island is so small, it makes the most sense to implement these policies on a statewide basis, in line with An Act on Climate.

**Section 2: Phase in Electric-ready New Construction.** This section addresses emissions from new construction by phasing in requirements for all-electric ready new construction. All-electric ready ensures that people *still have their choice of energy*, while encouraging electric. This is common sense. Simply, all-electric new construction is better for our climate, our health, and our wallets. We cannot continue to make the problem worse by building with fossil fuel equipment, which is designed to last 20 years. Building with fossil fuel equipment make it much less likely that the state can comply with the Act on Climate mandate to reduce emissions 45% by 2030. This is only five years away.

If Rhode Island want to create an attractive and thriving environment for businesses in the state, investing in a sustainable building sector needs to be a key component. Investing in sustainable buildings is part and parcel of other types of infrastructure investment. Further:

- Seven states including Massachusetts and many cities and towns have already acted on building decarbonization.
- Software for managing building emission tracking is readily available from the EPA.
- Many large companies, universities, and hospitals already track buildings emissions for their own net zero goals, and it is an easy lift to share this data with the state.

I am deeply concerned about climate change for my children's sake. *We are doing our part*, converting as much of our house as we can to electric. We bought an induction stove two years ago, and absolutely love it. In addition to boiling water faster than any gas stove, our indoor air is cleaner now. We also bought an electric dryer, and will put in mini-splits next year. We put in solar panels last year and also bought an electric car.

*I hope you will do your part too.* By supporting this bill, you will be helping all Rhode Islanders reduce carbon emissions, critical for making the world better for future generations. Importantly, this bill will also help clean our air. Our future is literally in your hands.

**Seventy-six years ago**, my grandfather, Dr. Roger Revelle and Hans Suess showed that the oceans were unable to buffer all of the increasing CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuel combustion, and that the excess CO<sub>2</sub> would go into the atmosphere. A recent [review in Science](#) shows that the fossil fuel companies' scientists knew about the harmful impact of CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere as early as the **50 years ago** (Supran et al., 2023). Climate projections from fossil fuel scientists themselves (specifically Exxon, as revealed by internal documents) closely matched those of independent climate scientists. We have procrastinated far too long in addressing the climate crisis to the detriment of all of us. The consequences of our procrastination are increasingly clear.

We all deserve the right of clean power in our homes, offices, and other buildings. I'm sure you also care deeply about the future for our children too. We need immediate action on climate change *because later is simply too late*.

I respectfully urge the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee to vote in favor of its passage. Thank you in advance for your action to protect Rhode Islander's future and health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carol Shumway". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Carol Shumway Cumberland, RI