

March 12, 2025

Subject: In Support of the Building Decarbonization Act of 2025 (H5493)

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the Committee,

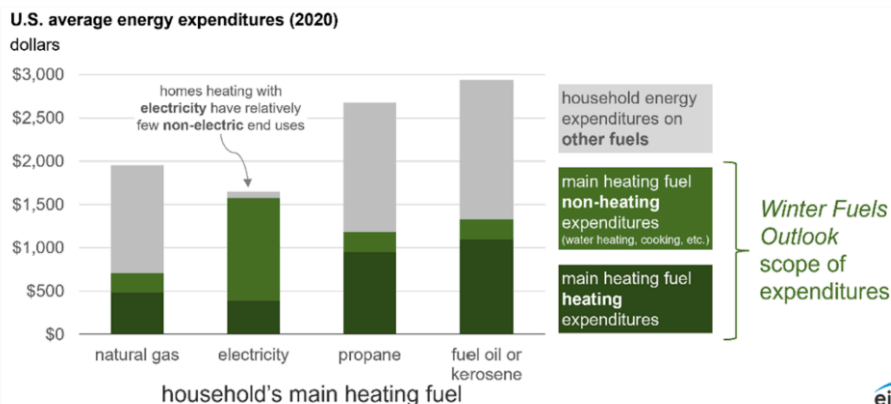
My name is Emily Totten and I am writing as a Rhode Islander and member of Climate Action Rhode Island. I am also a technical expert in building performance. I have a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Architecture, and I work as an Architectural Green Building Consultant at Sustainable Comfort, Inc., which specializes in green building practices for multifamily housing.

While understanding energy usage in buildings can seem daunting, this is something I work on every day, primarily for buildings in Massachusetts and New York. The Building Performance Standard allows Rhode Island to begin catching up to its neighbors in quantifying the climate-destroying emissions from its buildings.

The buildings sector (heating, cooling, cooking, and electricity) is the [largest source of emissions in Rhode Island](#), with 20.5% emissions from the heating, cooling, and cooking and 18.6% from electricity. However, neither the legislature nor agencies have taken action on building emissions since the Act on Climate passed in 2021.

There are other potential benefits for us to understand our buildings better. When a building performs poorly, it's not just the environment that hurts—it's the owner and occupants as well. Inefficient heating and cooling systems, poor insulation, and ineffective air sealing can cause discomfort to people using the space and lead to unnecessarily high energy bills. Tracking energy usage can also identify problems like water leaks that can cost thousands in property damage and be dangerous to occupants if left unchecked.

Once buildings are benchmarked and energy efficiency improvements are being considered, the actual expected savings can be a big factor in decision making. On a household level, less costly upgrades like air sealing and insulation (weatherization) can save an average of [\\$372 or more per year](#) according to a national evaluation of the U.S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program. Additionally, homes fueled by electricity alone have [significantly lower average energy expenditures](#).



Thank you in advance for your action to protect Rhode Island's climate.

Emily Totten