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Testimony of

Christopher Carlozzi, State Director, National Federation of Independent Business
In Opposition to House Bill No. 5493
An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Building Decarbonization Act of 2025
Before the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
March 12, 2025

Chairman Bennett and Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is Christopher Carlozzi. I am the Rhode Island Director of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). A non-profit, non-partisan organization, NFIB is the nation's and Rhode Island's largest small business advocacy group. In Rhode Island, NFIB represents hundreds of small and independent business owners involved in all types of industry, including manufacturing, retail, wholesale, service, and agriculture. The average NFIB member has five employees and annual gross revenues of about \$450,000. In short, NFIB represents the small Main Street business owners from across the state. On behalf of those small and independent business employers in Rhode Island, I urge you to oppose House Bill No. 5493 that adds new restrictions for residential and commercial building construction and enacts a building energy usage report requirement.

This bill will have a negative impact on both commercial and residential construction, as well as small business operations. Rhode Island already faces a housing shortage, and this new proposal demanding buildings must be electric-ready will only increase the scarcity of affordable housing. House Bill No. 5493 will further drive up the cost of residential homes by requiring the ability to go all-electric, making them even less affordable for working families. It will also increase expenses for businesses demanding their buildings must be electric-ready too, even if another form of energy works best for their operation. As the cost of building increases significantly, construction could very well grind to a halt and will diminish the desire for new projects. These types of stringent energy mandates will not only drive-up building costs but will leave businesses at a competitive disadvantage with states that do not require the additional expense outlined in this bill.

House Bill No. 5493 also mandates buildings over 25,000 square feet, including commercial structures, report their energy usage to the state. Buildings over 50,000 would have to start reporting as early as March 2026. This mandate requires a great deal of paperwork and attention from building owners, especially for short-staffed small businesses that cannot find enough workers in this current environment. The submitted data will set energy use benchmarks that will then require compliance from building owners. Imagine being a precision manufacturer, already at a disadvantage being located in a high energy

cost state like Rhode Island, and now having the state demand you be placed on a corrective path for your energy use in order to comply with a benchmark? This is not only an intrusive policy, but one that will hurt the competitiveness of the state's small businesses.

On behalf of Rhode Island's small businesses, I urge you to oppose House Bill No. 5493. Thank you.