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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

March 12, 2025

Honorable Representative David A. Bennett
House Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI

RE: **Testimony in Support of H-5493** – Building Decarbonization Act of 2025

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. On behalf of the 80,000 members and 275 affiliates of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, please accept this letter as testimony in strong support of H-5493, the Building Decarbonization Act of 2025. This legislation is a critical investment in **Rhode Island's climate goals and workforce**. It is not only a necessary step in achieving Rhode Island's climate commitments, but also a direct investment in the working people who will power our transition to a cleaner, more efficient future.

This legislation sets the framework for both benchmarking (energy use reporting) and performance standards (retrofits to lower emissions), within our building sector, which accounts for nearly 30% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. By establishing a measured program that starts with all large public buildings, over 25,000 square feet, we are ensuring a long-term pipeline of work for skilled union tradespeople in energy efficiency, HVAC, electrical, mechanical, and building operations. These are not just jobs, they are long-term, career-sustaining opportunities that provide high wages, strong benefits, and a pathway to the middle class.

As this program takes shape and additional state climate mandates quickly approach, significant infrastructure improvements will be necessary to remain in compliance with targets through 2050. This will require ongoing upgrades, retrofits, and energy-efficient improvements to both public and private facilities. This structured investment guarantees **stable, long-term employment opportunities for union members** while making our state buildings more cost-efficient and sustainable.

Additionally, this legislation supports Rhode Island's **Act on Climate** commitments, ensuring that the state leads by example in reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency. **This is not just an investment in infrastructure, it's an investment in working people, economic growth, and a cleaner future for all Rhode Islanders.**

For those reasons, I urge this committee to support H-5493 and I thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-751-7100.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erica Hammond".

Erica Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO

Patrick Crowley *President* • Karen Hazard *Secretary-Treasurer*
Cheryl Masciarelli *Office Manager* • Autumn Guillotte *Political Director* • Erica Hammond *Legislative Director*

