

TO: HouseEnvironmentandNaturalResources@rilegislature.gov

SUBJECT: **Support for House Bill No. 7183** BUILDING BENCHMARKING AND REPORTING ACT OF 2026

House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Caroly Shumway. I am a resident of Cumberland, RI, and an oceanographer, climate educator, and a member of the nonpartisan 800-member strong RI Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby (RICCL). **I am writing in strong support of House Bill No. 7183, and I hope that you will support it too.**

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 Senate bill will be passed this legislative session, the fourth year that it has been submitted.

Rhode Island used to be on the leading edge of environmental efforts, starting with Republican Senator John Chaffee, and being the first place to revolutionize recycling. **Now, Rhode Island has fallen behind. Won't you help us become a leader again?** For the building sector, the American Council on Energy Efficient Economies ranks RI behind MA, CT, and VT in New England (ACEEE, 2025). 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:

- It's not hard to do and it's not expensive. Providence has already done the work for 400 buildings.
- 7 states including MA and many cities/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.

It's common sense. The benchmarking knowledge resulting from this bill **will save money** when building standards are implemented, and **will also be a boon to those employed in the resulting labor.**

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 put in solar panels two years ago, and also bought an electric car. We also bought an induction stove, electric dryer, and will put in mini-splits next year.

I humbly ask you to consider your own legacy and do the right thing. Make RI a leader again on the environment, as it once was with its recycling initiatives. You will be helping all Rhode Islanders reduce carbon emissions, critical for making the world better for future generations. Our future is literally in your hands.

Seventy-six years ago, my grandfather, Dr. Roger Revelle (and later, Al Gore's mentor) and Hans Suess showed that the oceans were unable to buffer all of the increasing CO2 from fossil fuel combustion, and that the excess CO2 would go into the atmosphere. We have procrastinated for 76 years - far too long to address the climate crisis at the detriment of all of us. **The consequences and economic cost of our procrastination are increasingly clear. We need to act now before it's too late – for the sake of our children and future children.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroly Shumway".

Dr. Caroly Shumway, Cumberland, RI 02864

This is the year for Building Decarbonization

It's not hard, and it's not expensive

Providence is home to 40% of the large buildings in Rhode Island. Yet all the city needed to create and operate its benchmarking program was a half-time staffer and about \$100,000 for two software programs to automate the process and feed information automatically between the city, RI Energy, and the EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager.

Big impact

Buildings account for more than a third of all carbon emissions in the state. The EC4 Climate Strategy identified building decarbonization as a big-impact program essential to meeting the state's climate goals.

Much of the work is already done

Providence has already: a) designed a successful benchmarking program, b) negotiated an agreement with RI Energy, and c) developed the systems needed to run the program smoothly. The result is a plug-and-play system that is ready for the state and other municipalities adapt to their specific needs. Furthermore, Providence has already completed benchmarking for a nearly 40% of the large buildings in the state.

Saves money

By creating detailed energy use reports, the program provides owners of large buildings with the information needed to make efficiency upgrades that will save them money for years to come. RI's Climate Action plan states that building decarbonization "can mitigate energy consumption, reduce utility bills, and manage peak electricity demand and system costs."

No impact on homeowners or small businesses

This bill only involves the largest buildings in the state—those with more than 50,000 square feet. It has zero economic impact on homeowners or small businesses.

Improves public health

Heating with fossil fuels doesn't just pollute the atmosphere, it also releases harmful gasses into the buildings themselves. This a significant concern in public schools. Asthma rates are rising in Rhode Island and are above the national average. Worse yet, emergency room visits by children with asthma have spiked dramatically.

Flexibility for building owners

This bill does not dictate how building owners reduce their emissions. Options include heat pumps, weatherization, solar panels, and more. Owners can choose what works best for them.

Bill Ibelle, CARI political team co-leader