



Climate Jobs Rhode Island
1540 Pontiac Ave Suite A,
Cranston, RI 02920

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Representative David A. Bennett
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Support H-7183, Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026 & H-7184,
Building Performance Standards Act of 2026**

Dear Chair Bennett and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. On behalf of Climate Jobs Rhode Island, I write in **strong support** of **House Bill 7183**, the Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026, and **House Bill 7184**, the Building Performance Standards Act of 2026.

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) labor unions, environmental, and community organizations committed to working together to make Rhode Island a national leader in the development of a resilient 21st century economy through a Just Transition, that centers our frontline communities and frontline workers.

Our members range from those who represent the frontline workers who build, repair, and maintain Rhode Island's critical infrastructure and energy systems, to community groups like the United Way of RI and Childhood Lead Action Project, to environmental organizations like The Nature Conservancy, and Clean Water Action.

House Bill 7183, Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026

Rhode Island's building sector accounts for nearly 30% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. House Bill 7183 takes an important first step by establishing a statewide building benchmarking and reporting framework for large buildings.. **Quite simply, you cannot reduce what you do not measure.**

Under H7183, the benchmarking requirement applies to larger commercial and multifamily buildings, with properties **50,000 square feet and above beginning reporting in 2028 and buildings over 25,000 square feet beginning in 2030**. This phased approach focuses first on the buildings with the greatest energy use while giving owners time to prepare for compliance.

By requiring large buildings to track and report their energy use, this legislation provides building owners with the data needed to identify inefficiencies, target upgrades, and reduce operating costs. Benchmarking has proven to be one of the most cost-effective strategies for improving building efficiency and helping owners make informed investments while lowering energy waste and utility bills.

According to the [Energy Efficiency Council](#)'s most recent annual report,

- Energy Efficiency programs in RI delivered \$448 million in total benefits to residents,
- Supported 740 full-time jobs in the state, and
- Returned approximately \$3 in benefits for every \$1 invested.

At the same time, the improvements identified through benchmarking create new opportunities for skilled workers to upgrade building systems and modernize Rhode Island's building stock.

Benchmarking reduces energy consumption and saves building owners money. Providence has already implemented building energy benchmarking, demonstrating that this policy works in practice. H7183 builds on Providence's leadership by expanding benchmarking statewide, creating consistent standards across Rhode Island while allowing municipalities with existing programs to continue their efforts.

House Bill 7184, Building Performance Standards Act of 2026

House Bill 7184 builds off the foundation that would be created by H-7183 by directing the Office of Energy Resources to establish building performance standards that ensure large buildings steadily reduce energy use and emissions over time. Because most of the buildings that will exist in 2050 are already built today, improving the efficiency of existing buildings is essential to achieving Rhode Island's net-zero emissions targets. By setting clear performance standards and timelines, this legislation supports emissions reductions, lower energy costs, and job creation in building efficiency and clean energy.

Improving building performance will require deep energy retrofits and major efficiency upgrades across existing buildings. These investments will support good-paying local jobs in construction, building trades, and clean energy- creating a predictable pipeline of energy efficiency projects and allowing workers and contractors to ramp up capacity, build experience with deep retrofits, and prepare for Rhode Island's increasing climate targets while supporting steady job growth. **These are local, skilled jobs that modernize building while strengthening Rhode Island's clean energy economy.**

Importantly, this legislation includes provisions to provide technical assistance and resources for building owners to meet performance standards, considers impacts on communities facing

economic and environmental challenges, and offers flexibility through alternative compliance payments or hardship exemptions when necessary. This ensures the transition to cleaner buildings is both practical and equitable.

Together, these policies create a clear, phased approach that will drive investment in energy efficiency, HVAC upgrades, electrical work, and building operations while creating sustained job opportunities for skilled tradespeople.

The bills also lay the foundation for future expansion, including potential requirements for large municipal and private buildings, ensuring compliance with the Act on Climate's net-zero mandate by 2050. Rhode Island would be following the lead of other states such as California, Colorado, Georgia, and others, that have successfully implemented building benchmarking and or performance standards at state and or municipal levels, positioning us as a regional leader in clean energy and workforce development.

We urge you to support H-7183 to advance both climate action and economic opportunity in Rhode Island. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aislinn Hanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aislinn" and the last name "Hanley" clearly distinguishable.

Aislinn Hanley, *Program Director*
Climate Jobs Rhode Island