



Advancing the Clean Energy Future

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House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Support of House Bill No. 7183 Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026
and House Bill No. 7184 Building Performance Standards Act of 2026

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I write today on behalf of Acadia Center in enthusiastic support of House Bills 7183 and 7184, the Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act and Building Performance Standards Act. This is the fifth year that building benchmarking and performance standards legislation has been introduced. The effort has continually emerged as a top legislative priority for the Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI), a coalition of more than 60 environmental organizations. **Benchmarking and performance standards for large buildings remain a critical – and all the more urgent – first step towards reducing emissions in the building sector. By tracking energy usage and building performance, large public and private building owners can lower energy costs and chart a path toward investing in energy efficiency (EE) and electrification**

[Acadia Center](#) is a non-profit organization with over 25 years of experience dedicated to advancing transformative clean energy solutions that promote a livable climate and a more equitable economy at the state, regional and community levels primarily in the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada. Through rigorous data analysis and strategic partnerships, Acadia Center advocates for policies that significantly reduce carbon emissions and address systemic energy challenges. By collaborating with stakeholders, government, business, and communities, Acadia Center pursues ambitious but pragmatic strategies that help to ensure an inclusive and sustainable energy future for all.

Acting on Climate Will Rely on Significant Energy Efficiency and Electrification

The Act on Climate requires statewide emissions reductions of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, 80% by 2040, and net-zero emissions by 2050. **Buildings** in Rhode Island, solely accounting for residential and commercial heating, **are responsible for nearly 30% of our state's greenhouse gas emissions.** The recently released [2025 Climate Action Strategy](#) details the technical pathway and strategies to achieve emission reductions. Both the current policy scenario and Act on Climate scenario **rely on significant energy efficiency (EE) and building electrification for building emission reduction.** We see this repeated across numerous plans, including the [2022 Climate Update](#) and the PUC's [Future of Gas Technical Analysis Report](#), as well as the decarbonization pathways of neighboring states such as Massachusetts. The analysis in Rhode Island's 2025 strategy further finds that the benefits of decarbonization outweigh the costs, citing reduced spending on fossil fuels, avoided economic and health damages caused by climate change, and cleaner air and communities across the state. **This transition**

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requires first understanding energy usage, performance, and emissions across Rhode Island’s building stock, in order to find efficiencies and ultimately electrify.

Benchmarking Yields Information and Cost Savings for Building Owners

House Bill 7183 proposes benchmarking for large existing buildings, requiring the tracking and reporting of energy usage in large residential and non-residential buildings in two phases. **Equipped with a better understanding of their utility bills and energy consumption, building owners can then leverage data to make cost-effective investments in energy efficiency that will save them money** and reduce their energy usage and thus emissions. **Benchmarking is a no-brainer for tackling energy waste and combatting rising energy costs, and is a widespread best practice of governments, institutions, and private companies who manage properties¹.**

Tracking the energy usage of buildings is a critical foundation to understanding and ultimately reducing emissions in the building sector. The state’s implementation of a range of Lead by Example executive orders and policies is not possible without benchmarking – establishing the baseline site energy use intensity in order to then make reductions. Benchmarking programs like this focus on large buildings because they have the greatest potential for impact.

Acadia Center is confident that the state can roll out benchmarking for public and private buildings at a pace that matches administrative capacity. The state already has a record of benchmarking its own buildings and setting aside funds for cost-effective energy improvements. The City of Providence is leading in implementing benchmarking now, for public and private buildings; a tiered approach has allowed Providence to gradually compile its list of covered buildings and tackle challenges related to data aggregation and software automation with the utility. The Building Data Portal developed by Rhode Island Energy is already available for free to building managers across the state.

Resources Available for Meeting Flexible Building Performance Standards

Following the collection of baseline data, House Bill 7184 proposes that the Office of Energy Resources (OER) and the EC4 set a building performance standard to guide these large building owners through setting long-term energy reduction and emissions targets. **Performance standards may be met flexibly based on the specific opportunities identified through benchmarking, and may include energy efficiency (EE) or other building system upgrades.** Rhode Island’s nation-leading EE programs have demonstrated that the benefits of EE far outweigh the cost of implementation – every dollar invested in EE has resulted in three dollars of benefits for Rhode Islanders.

¹ Here in Rhode Island, businesses and institutions ranging from Ocean State Job Lot to Johnson & Wales University to CVS track their energy usage in order to make cost-saving investments in energy efficiency. The City of Providence has saved tens of millions of dollars by tracking its energy usage for over a decade.

Further, **building owners – the state, municipalities, and private companies – have access to a range of technical assistance and funding options to support the tracking of their energy usage and building performance investments.** The state’s Lead by Example initiative has allocated significant RGGI funding to support EE and renewable energy projects at Rhode Island state government facilities (across the four RGGI allocations in 2024, over \$6 million was allocated to this purpose). Municipalities and private companies have access to incentives through the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (i.e. the Energy Asset Management Program) and Rhode Island Energy’s EE rebates/incentives and on-bill repayment program.

Thank you again for your consideration of these important bills to tackle emissions in the building sector. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,
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