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

March 11, 2026

Chairman David A. Bennett
House Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of HB7183 and HB7184

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO representing 80,000 union members and 275 affiliated local unions, I write in support of House Bills 7183 and 7184, the Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act and the Building Performance Standards Act. These bills are a critical investment in Rhode Island's infrastructure and workforce. They both represent a necessary step in achieving Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandates and an investment in our local workforce that will be tasked with constructing these building upgrades.

The Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act (HB7183) requires buildings over 25,000 square feet to track their energy use based on benchmarking requirements to be established by the Office of Energy Resources (OER). Energy tracking is a simple step building owners can take and has proven successful in helping to lower emissions in the building sector. Similarly, the Building Performance Standards Act (HB7184) directs OER to establish energy efficiency and reduction targets for buildings over 25,000 square feet.

Our building sector accounts for roughly 30% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. By establishing a measured program that starts with all large 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 emissions reduction 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.

The success of this system of energy tracking and energy reduction has been both tested and proven by the City of Providence, businesses owners, and many cities and states across the country. For those reasons, I urge the Committee to support House Bills 7183 and 7184 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.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erica A. Hammond', is written in a cursive style.

Erica A. Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO