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March 11, 2026

Testimony is support of H8132: Decarbonization Demonstration Initiative Act

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

Dear Chairman Bennett and Committee Members,

I am writing as the executive director of Climate Action RI and a lifelong Rhode Islander. CARI is a grassroots organization of Rhode Islanders who are dedicated to the just transition to clean, renewable energy. We have well over 4,000 supporters, and that number is growing with the growing urgency of the climate crises and because supporting clean, science-based, affordable renewable energy is part and parcel of standing up to the retrograde, non-sensical, unamerican policies of the Trump administration.

I am writing in this capacity to voice our **strong support** for H8132, the Decarbonization Demonstration Initiative Act.

In Rhode Island we face two intertwined crises. First is the climate crisis. Global warming is already increasing flooding both on our coasts and inland, stressing our ecosystems, moving our shellfish populations north, and increasing deadly heat stress in the summer, and this crisis is just getting started! We must do all we can to minimize our contribution to this disaster.

The second crisis is our dependence on an antiquated energy system dependent on expensive, polluting, and volatile fossil fuels designed for the last century, not the current one. Our urgent task is to move to a new, clean, affordable, modern system which will be incredibly beneficial to Rhode Islanders, both to our health and our prosperity. The end goal is clear, but what is very complicated is making this transition quickly and intelligently with the least amount of disruption and especially while protecting our most vulnerable citizens.

Perhaps the most fraught task will be the necessary elimination of natural gas as a heating fuel. The simple fact is that more and more homes will transition off natural gas and to more efficient heat pumps, leaving the remaining smaller customer base to bear the burden of maintaining an aging distribution system. These spiraling costs will most affect lower income residents who rent or cannot afford the cost of a new heating system.

To put a comprehensive and forward-looking plan together we need the knowledge that comes from taking initial steps in this direction. This bill would start to provide some of this experience by supporting the feasibility studies for owners of large multifamily buildings. As these buildings are often the best ones to move to geothermal heating systems because the cost of one installation is spread over multiple units, many buildings will use this support to transition to geothermal heat providing real world data on the costs and benefits, informing more comprehensive planning.

Furthermore, tax credits for geothermal systems are one of the few federal renewable energy programs that the Trump administration has not cancelled. This program would increase Rhode Island benefiting from these federal funds.

Additionally, using geothermal for these buildings has many benefits not just for the owners and residents of these buildings, such as lower utility bills year round, and healthier indoor air, it also helps the surrounding neighborhood by decreasing local air pollution and its dramatic health impacts, reducing demand on the electrical system in the summer and the gas system in the winter, reducing gas distribution costs by removing the supply lines to these buildings, and reducing urban heat islands caused by traditional air conditioning units.

For all these reasons I encourage you to support the passage of this bill.

Respectively yours,

Jeff Migneault
Executive Director
Climate Action Rhode Island