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March 25, 2026

The Honorable David Bennett
Chairman, House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Bennett and Members of the Committee:

The Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce (NRICC) represents businesses across Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster, Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Scituate, Smithfield, and Woonsocket.

On behalf of our membership, the Chamber respectfully submits this testimony in opposition to H.7004, the Rhode Island Climate Superfund Act of 2026.

H.7004 proposes a sweeping and unprecedented framework requiring the state and municipalities to calculate and aggregate costs incurred over the past twenty-five years for a broad range of climate-related impacts, including sea level rise, flooding, storm surge, extreme heat, drought, and erosion. The legislation would then authorize the state to impose financial liability on so-called "responsible parties," defined as companies engaged in the extraction and refinement of fossil fuels—activities that have long been lawful under both federal and state statutes.

The bill further mandates that these entities fund an expansive array of public infrastructure and environmental initiatives, including but not limited to coastal protection, stormwater and drainage upgrades, heat mitigation, air quality improvements, transportation and housing resilience, energy system modernization, ecosystem restoration, and hazard planning and monitoring systems. The scope of these obligations is extraordinarily broad and lacks clear limiting principles.

Additionally, H.7004 imposes a punitive ten percent daily penalty on any late payments, creating significant financial exposure and uncertainty. Experience in other states underscores the risks associated with this approach. Similar legislation enacted in Vermont is currently the subject of litigation in federal court, with the state already committing substantial taxpayer resources to defend the law. Vermont allocated \$600,000 in FY25 to establish the program and prepare for legal challenges, followed by an additional \$300,000 in FY26



for litigation defense. State agencies have also requested approximately \$1.5 million to retain outside experts in anticipation of ongoing legal disputes.

Beyond these fiscal concerns, the Chamber is particularly troubled by the bill's retroactive liability structure. H.7004 effectively seeks to impose penalties on businesses for activities that were legal at the time they were conducted, raising serious legal and constitutional questions. This approach creates a dangerous precedent that extends well beyond the energy sector and introduces uncertainty for all Rhode Island businesses. It is reasonable for employers across industries to question whether they could be subject to similar retroactive liability in the future.

For these reasons, the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the Committee to oppose H.7004. Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monika Zuluaga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Monika" and last name "Zuluaga" clearly legible.

Monika P. Zuluaga
President & CEO