

March 24, 2026

Representative David Bennett, Chair
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: House Bill 7004 – Rhode Island Climate Superfund Act of 2026

Dear Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

The New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association (NECSEMA) represents convenience stores and gasoline retailers, independent transportation fuel distributors, and the businesses which supply them. NECSEMA members own, operate and/or supply the majority of the 550 convenience stores in Rhode Island. Our members are a significant contributor to Rhode Island's economy, employing over 8,800 people and remitting over \$750 million to the state's tax coffers annually. We play a crucial role in the state's commercial landscape, providing essential goods and services to residents, generating employment opportunities, and contributing to the overall prosperity of local communities.

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to H. 7004 “*An Act Concerning a Climate Change Superfund*”. While these bills seek to hold large petroleum companies liable for the environmental impacts of climate change in Rhode Island, the parties that would ultimately pay for these bills are Rhode Island residents – your constituents and our customers.

The tax that these bills seek to levy on energy producers, through a convoluted and arbitrary calculation, will ultimately be paid by every business and person that participates in the sale or use of petroleum products. These costs will inevitably be passed along to consumers in the form of higher energy prices, transportation costs, and goods inflation. The resulting burden will inevitably be regressive as it will fall disproportionately on households of limited means and on small businesses, effectively functioning as a regressive tax that exacerbates energy affordability challenges.

Our retailers know that consumers are already stretched thin due to inflation, high interest rates, record utility prices, and a cooling local job market. The billions of dollars in fees that these bills seek to levy against companies doing business in Rhode Island will ultimately be passed on to consumers and will exacerbate these economic stressors. Rhode Island should be looking to relieve the growing costs that our residents are facing, not to add to them.

NECSEMA also represents retailers in Vermont, and previously opposed Vermont's 2024 Climate Superfund Act that has triggered multiple costly legal challenges. If H. 7004 is ultimately enacted, Rhode Island will face the same legal hurdles and litigation expenses. These funds would be better spent on programs like the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program or to reduce utility costs for consumers.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Brennan".

Peter A. Brennan, Esq