

**Testimony in support of H7081: Next Generation Public Buildings Act, Hearing Date  
March 25, 2026**

Submitted by Barbara K. Sullivan-Watts, PhD for The Rhode Island Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby. I live in Kingston, RI 02881.

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

My name is Barbara K. Sullivan-Watts. I live in Kingston R.I. Also relevant to my testimony is that I have been a member of the University of Rhode Island community as a research scientist at the Narragansett Bay Campus for > 30 years. Also that I am the State Coordinator for Citizens Climate Lobby of RI.

I commend Representative Boylan and Co-Sponsors of the is Bill, Reps. Kislak, McGaw, Handy, Fogarty, Spears, Speakman, Cortvriend, and Carson for encouraging a prime vehicle for the Governor's "Lead by Example" mandate for state entities to utilize renewable energy...to meet Rhode Island's 2021 Act on Climate". This 2026 H7081 Bill gives two years warning to those responsible for new and significantly renovated state and municipal buildings to plan and execute new construction that forgoed fossil fuels for heating of air and water, and to comply with state building codes. The potential for waivers to be granted due to extenuating circumstances appears to apply the Bill in a reasonable way.

Large buildings, of which state and municipal building are a significant fraction, account much of the dirty, greenhouse gas emissions in this state. In addition, this bill is a money saving one. Shifts to renewable fuels for heating and cooling reduce those costs of the heating and cooling. This saves money for taxpayers.

Had this bill been in effect last year it is very likely that at least one additional building of two being newly constructed at the University of Rhode Island Narragansett Bay Campus would be geothermally heated and cooled. Fortunately, the URI committee examining the potential for geothermal on cost and emissions savings had the foresight to apply the idea of geothermal to the Ocean Frontiers Building. This is leading by example in a prominent and well-known site. Imagine if examples like this become more and more available to educate and change the mind set of those responsible for constructing new buildings.

Members of Citizens Climate Lobby know that air quality improves inside and outside of buildings constructed to heat and cool by renewable energy. They know that costs can be reduced. And most importantly they know that action on climate is urgent.

We urge you to pass this bill H7081.

Sincerely,

Barbara K. Sullivan-Watts, PhD

Kingston, RI 02881