



March 25, 2026

The Honorable David A. Bennett  
Chairman  
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: H-7912 An Act Relating to Health and Safety – The Rhode Island Clean Heat Standard Act**

Dear Chairman Bennett,

We write to express our strong opposition to H-7912. While we share the goal of reducing emissions and advancing Rhode Island’s climate objectives, affordability remains the top priority of the McKee Administration. Especially following one of the coldest winters in recent memory, **the state should not pursue policies that risk increasing the cost of heating homes for Rhode Islanders.**

Just this week, data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration showed that Rhode Island experienced the largest year-over-year increase in heating oil prices of any state in the nation.<sup>1</sup> At a time when Rhode Islanders are already facing sharply rising heating costs, the state should not pursue policies that risk further increasing the cost of keeping homes warm.

H-7912 would create a new clean heat credit mandate requiring fuel suppliers and natural gas utilities to purchase credits each year. These compliance costs will not be absorbed by suppliers; they will ultimately be passed through to customers in the form of higher heating costs. At a time when families are already struggling with energy bills, this proposal risks placing additional financial burdens on Rhode Islanders, particularly during the winter months when heating costs are unavoidable.

Other states considering similar policies have identified significant affordability risks. Vermont, which pursued a comparable Clean Heat Standard, found that the program could cost Vermonters more than \$955 million over the first ten years.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, Vermont abandoned the policy due to affordability concerns. Massachusetts has also delayed implementation of its Clean Heat Standard,

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2026). Heating Oil and Propane Update.  
<https://www.eia.gov/petroleum/heatingoilpropane/#itn-tabs-2>

<sup>2</sup> Vermont Public Utility Commission, Second Checkback Report on the Clean Heat Standard (Act 18 of 2023), submitted to the Vermont General Assembly, Jan. 15, 2025.  
<https://puc.vermont.gov/sites/psbnew/files/documents/second-checkback-report-on-clean-heat-standard-act-18-011525.pdf>

citing similar concerns about potential cost impacts on residents.<sup>3</sup> These experiences should serve as cautionary examples for Rhode Island.

Importantly, the Vermont analysis also identified regressive impacts. Higher heating costs disproportionately affected low- and moderate-income households, those least able to afford new heating systems or energy efficiency upgrades. This is a particularly serious concern in Rhode Island, where many residents rely on heating oil, propane, or natural gas and may not have the financial means to transition quickly to alternative technologies.

In addition, H-7912 establishes this program without first requiring a comprehensive, independent cost analysis. Moving forward with a program of this magnitude without first understanding its full cost implications raises significant transparency and good-government concerns. Moreover, the Department of Environmental Management is not currently resourced to implement a program of this scale, raising serious concerns about the state's ability to effectively administer and oversee the Clean Heat Standard.

Finally, the bill does not include a firm ceiling on credit prices or limits on annual ratepayer impacts. Instead, affordability protections are left largely to future regulatory decisions. Given the potential magnitude of these costs, such protections should be clearly established in statute before any program is authorized.

For these reasons, **we oppose H-7912 because it would increase heating costs, disproportionately impact low- and moderate-income households, and move forward without sufficient transparency or cost safeguards.** Therefore, we respectfully urge the committee to reject H-7912.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Linda George, Esq.  
Administrator  
Division of Public Utilities and Carriers



Terrence Gray, P.E.  
Director

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<sup>3</sup> Jordan Wolman, Healey Administration Pushes Back Clean Heat Standard to 2028 as Affordability Concerns Mount, Commonwealth Beacon (Jan. 14, 2026). <https://commonwealthbeacon.org/energy/healey-administration-pushes-back-clean-heat-standard-to-2028-as-affordability-concerns-mount/>

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Department of Environmental Management

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Kearns". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris Kearns  
Acting Commissioner  
Office of Energy Resources

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
The Honorable Terri Cortvriend  
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House  
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director