GREEN ENERGY CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

Representative David Bennett, Chair **March 25th , 2026**
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives

RE: Green Energy Consumers Alliance Supports House Bill 7912

Dear Chair Bennett and members of the committee,

On behalf of Green Energy Consumers Alliance and our thousands of members across Rhode Island, **I write in strong support of House Bill 7912,** which would direct the Department of Environmental Management to begin developing a Clean Heat Standard program.

Rhode Island Is Not on Track to Achieve Our Climate Targets
The building sector accounts for over 30% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the state, and we do not currently have a clear path on how to reduce these emissions. The Act on Climate mandates that Rhode Island reduce its total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 45% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. However, the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Councils (EC4's) 2025 Rhode Island Climate Action Strategy shows that the state is not on track to meet the Act on Climate under current policies. Since 2022, residential heating emissions have risen in Rhode Island, from 9.38 $MMTCO_2e$ (2022) to 9.52 $MMTCO_2e$ (2023) (RIDEM 2025 Greenhouse Gas Inventory, p. 26), further indicating that the state is not yet on the right path towards emissions reductions in the building sector. To achieve the Act on Climate, essentially all buildings by 2050 must be carbon-free, and retrofitting existing buildings will be key as 70% of our building stock in 2050 is already in place today. A Clean Heat Standard provides a policy framework that will help electrify both existing buildings and new construction.

Rhode Island Has Acknowledged the Value of a Clean Heat Standard
In the 2025 Rhode Island Climate Action Strategy, a Clean Heat Standard (CHS) was one policy modeled to evaluate its potential for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This policy resulted in the most significant emissions reductions of any other building sector focused policy, indicating the outsized impact of developing a CHS for Rhode Island. H7912 utilizes the policy outline in the Climate Action Strategy to determine the agencies responsible for developing and enforcing a CHS.

Figure 36: Building Sector Emissions by Strategy (ktCO2e)

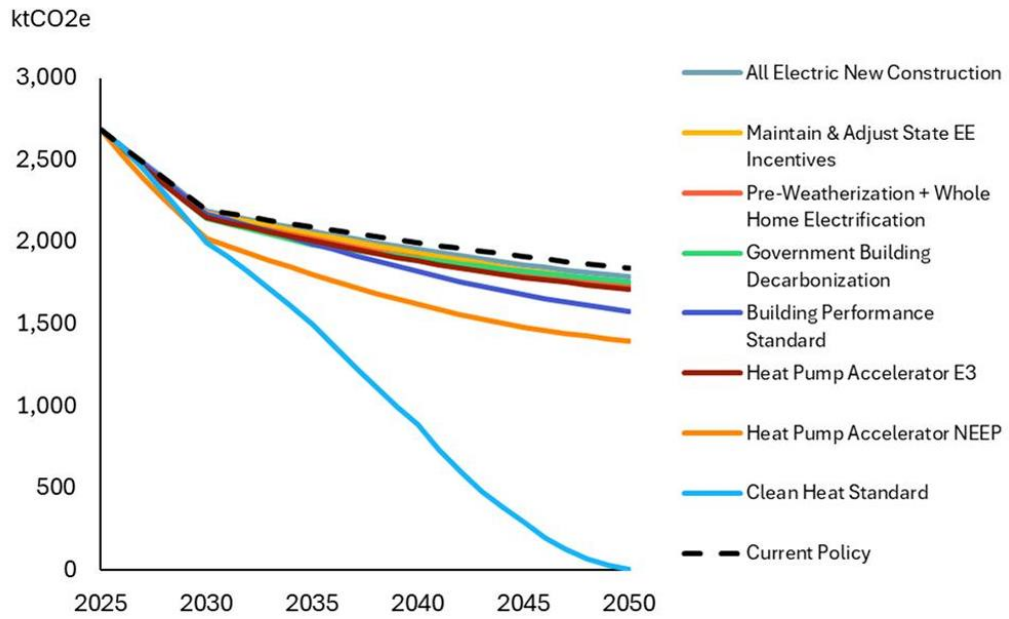

Image: 2025 Rhode Island Climate Action Strategy, p. 100.

Additionally, on September 21st, 2023, as part of the U.S. Climate Alliance, Rhode Island committed to exploring the development of a Clean Heat Standard. In February 2024, Rhode Island and eight other states joined with NESCAUM to develop a plan to increase electrification of residential buildings via heat pumps with a goal for heat pumps to contribute 65% of residential heating, air conditioning, and water heating sales by 2030. Prior to the release of the 2025 Climate Action Strategy, the EC4's 2022 Climate Update included "Begin Developing a Renewable Thermal Standard" as a priority action for the Thermal Sector. These commitments acknowledge the importance of a Clean Heat Standard in achieving our climate goals, but we have yet to see any action towards implementation.

For further evidence that a Clean Heat Standard is essential to building decarbonization, we would also refer you to RMI's State Energy Policy Simulator. Once again, there you can see how a Clean Heat Standard, or using the tool, 100% building component electrification, scores high compared to other potential decarbonization strategies.

What is a Clean Heat Standard?

A Clean Heat Standard (CHS) is a performance standard that requires heating suppliers such as gas utilities and oil and propane dealers to provide customers with gradually increasing percentages of clean heat services, phasing out the sale of fossil fuels. These providers would be required to obtain a certain amount of "Clean Heat Credits", which would be generated by deploying "clean heat measures" such as heat pumps, clean district energy, weatherization, and other verified low-carbon options. Over time, the number of credits each heating provider would be required to obtain would increase in line with the Act on Climate's greenhouse gas reduction mandate.

What Should Count as a Clean Heat Measure?

Ultimately, the bill leaves it up to the Department of Environmental Management to determine what should count as a clean heat measure. Examples of what we believe should count as clean heat measures include weatherization, energy efficiency, heat pumps, heat pump hot water heaters, and geothermal. However, the bill explicitly states that Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) and Hydrogen **may not** count as clean heat measures. You can read more about why RNG and Hydrogen are **not** the answer to home heating in our blog.

If Not a Clean Heat Standard, Then What?

In order to achieve the amount of GHG emissions necessary in the building sector, we need a policy driver that enables us to install the amount of heat pumps necessary to achieve the Act on Climate.

- Incentives alone ➡ not strong enough
- Public funds and taxes ➡ not reliable enough
- Building codes and bans ➡ not fast enough as they only affect new construction

Benefits of a Clean Heat Standard

- **Creates a sustainable funding mechanism for electrification.** Presently, the state energy efficiency program is funded by surcharges on electricity and natural gas. However, it is insufficiently funded to finance the gradual transition to building electrification, which is necessary to achieve the requirements of the Act on Climate. Furthermore, consumers who heat with oil or propane contribute less to the efficiency program than gas customers because oil and propane customers only pay the electricity surcharge. This funding approach for energy efficiency programs is unsustainable as we transition towards electrification, and it does not make sense to further increase the electricity surcharge to finance electrification.
- **Does not require consumers to make any particular clean heat choices.** The mandate is solely on the fossil-fuel heating suppliers.
- **Performance Standards Work.** We've learned from both energy efficiency standards and renewable energy standards that this can be a viable policy driver for emissions savings in the thermal sector.

Equity Can and Must Be Built In

Disadvantaged communities are more likely to reside in aging and less energy-efficient homes, leading to increased energy burdens. Additionally, these communities bear a disproportionate share of the adverse health effects linked to society's heavy reliance on fossil fuels. H7912 ensures that equity is built into the CHS by requiring that 40% of clean heat services be delivered to low-and-moderate-income consumers.

A Clean Heat Standard can also help contain electricity rates, depending on its design. One way would be to use the credit system to speed up the conversion of electric resistance space and water heating (ERH) to high-efficiency heat pumps. That would reduce energy and demand costs for all ratepayers, and particularly for those that currently utilize ERH.

Rhode Island Would Follow Learnings from Larger Markets

Colorado has adopted a CHS and three of their gas utilities have had their Clean Heat Plans approved by the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, and Maryland is currently developing a CHS as required by a state Executive Order. Rhode Island will benefit from the learnings of other states who are further along in the process.

Conclusion

In order to achieve the Act on Climate, we must implement macro-policies that drive market transformation towards electrification. The Clean Heat Standard does just that. Green Energy Consumers Alliance thanks Representative Cortvriend for introducing this important legislation and urges the Committee and full General Assembly to vote in favor of its passage.

Sincerely,

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