



Connecting People with Nature

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

April 26, 2022

Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island Supports H 7755, Governor's Clean Energy Workforce Transition Commission

Dear Chair Abney and members of House Committee on Finance,

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members Representatives Donovan, Carson, Cortvriend, Speakman, Ruggiero, Williams, Alzate, Ranglin-Vassell, McEntee, and Caldwell for introducing H 7755.

In my professional capacity, I serve as both the Senior Director of Government Affairs at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, the President of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, and the Co-chair of the Climate Jobs Rhode Island Coalition.

In June 2020, Audubon adopted a strategic plan is entirely built around the climate crisis. Through this plan, Audubon has committed to direct all our organizational priorities towards addressing the climate crisis, which led Audubon to co-lead the effort to mobilize advocates and Rhode Islanders to support the passage of the 2021 Act On Climate. Audubon's strategic plan also recognized the need for an inclusive and equitable climate justice movement.

Audubon's strategic pan led Audubon to join environmental partners and labor to form Climate Jobs Rhode Island: a partnership between labor and environmental groups working together toward a Just Transition to a Green Economy in Rhode Island. Our first shared goal was to establish science-based mandatory and enforceable emissions limits leading to economy-wide 100% net-zero emissions by 2050, with significant, measurable progress before 2030. We also jointly recognized that a just transition toward a green economy as we work to address the climate crisis needs to center the voices of frontline workers and frontline communities, who will continue to be disproportionately impacted throughout this transition, especially if we do not enact policies like labor standards in renewable energy projects.

We need a Clean Energy Workforce Transition Commission for the following reasons:

- This bill complements the implementation of the Act On Climate legislation championed by the Senate last year and enacted into law in 2021. Act On Climate requires a robust stakeholder

- process centering on the voices of frontline workers and frontline and environmental justice communities—Black, Brown, Indigenous, and People of Color and low-income communities—who are disproportionately impacted by pollution and a transition from a fossil-fuel-based economy to a clean energy economy.
- It lays the groundwork for a “just transition” and identify opportunities to employ those workers, residents of low-income communities, and communities of color in the clean energy sector. It establishes the Clean Energy Workforce Transition Commission, which would be responsible for strategic planning for a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy in Rhode Island. It would evaluate, plan and coordinate efforts to increase access to employment and training opportunities in clean energy industries and related fields.
- Supports an inclusive and expansive green economy: The Act on Climate calls for efforts to ensure that fossil fuel industry workers and communities that have long suffered disproportionately from environmental hazards are included in the resulting expansion of the state’s green economy.
- Representation: The state needs a transition “hub” that works to understand the full scope of industry and workforce impacts and opportunities related to decarbonization efforts, with representation from impacted workers and communities.
- New York (*Just Transition Task Force*) and Colorado (*Office of Just Transition*) already have similar models in place.

In addition, both labor and environmental groups are prioritizing a 100% increase in the Renewable Energy Standard by 2030, and House bill 7755 complements that effort to create thousands of well-paying union jobs in solar and wind.

We urge you to support H 7755 and take this critical step toward economic justice that is critical to the implementation outcomes of the 2021 Act On Climate.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



Priscilla De La Cruz
Senior Director of Government Affairs