



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
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Peter F. Neronha
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February 14, 2023

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
State House, Room 35
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: HB5200 – Article 5: Funding for Executive Climate Change Council Projects
at the Office of Energy Resources**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I write today to express my strong support for the Governor's Budget Proposal to provide funding for the Executive Climate Change Council ("EC4") to enable its critical work towards ensuring that Rhode Island meets the greenhouse gas emission reduction mandates set forth in the Act on Climate. This is no small task, and funding is necessary if we expect to coordinate and realize the large-scale systematic changes that will be required to combat climate change and its impacts on the Ocean State.

However, I also write to express my concerns and opposition with respect to the source of funding for EC4, as set forth in Governor McKee's FY 2024 Budget Proposal at Article 5, Section 4 of H5200. The proposal reallocates funding from the energy efficiency program, which is paid for by, and therefore would inequitably burden, gas and electric ratepayers. Currently, these funds go directly to fund initiatives that ratepayers can use to lower their home heating and electric bills. Using these funds, which are gathered only from utility customers and not all taxpayers, would not equitably spread the burden among users of the State's largest sources of greenhouse gasses, such as sources within the transportation sector and heating systems relying on delivered fuels. Moreover, this proposal shifts funding away from current and potential energy efficiency programs without any guarantee that the savings from these programs will be recouped by the increase in funding for EC4.

This proposal also stands to disproportionately harm environmental justice communities, who already shoulder more than their share of the cost associated with climate change. Many of these communities are found in areas traditionally serviced by both electric and natural gas (as opposed to rural areas that often rely on delivered fuels), and the residents often lack the means to switch to alternatives exempt from this funding mechanism, such as solar installations.

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While we must ensure adequate investment and resources for EC4's efforts, I urge you to do so by other means. The benefits of EC4's important work will benefit all Rhode Islanders, and the funding for that work should be borne equitably by all of us.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General