



Environment Council of Rhode Island

**From Peter Trafton of Providence, on behalf of the Environment Council of RI
Testimony in support of H 5203 House Committee on Finance 4.29.2025**

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, I write with strong support for H 5203, by Rep Cortvriend and colleagues.

This is at least the 3rd year that a version of this bill has been introduced to House and Senate, in hopes of improving the energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and optimally healthy atmosphere in Rhode Island classrooms. The NE – CHPS standards are highly regarded, updated periodically, and will achieve the goals for our schools and students. This bill provides guidance and support for the Department of Education and the Office of Energy Resources to help each local education agency to meet the goals provided by the NE – CHPS standards.

It provides guidance for building and using solar panels on the school roofs and for seeking federal support of funding (hopefully available or restored if need be). It provides guidance for appropriation of funds for state housing aid of schools.

The existing text includes prevailing wage laws and minority business participation. The proposed amendments include ensuring apprenticeship program utilization and, for larger projects, consideration of project labor agreement.

The ultimate goal is to have all Rhode Island's schools meet the proposed standards by the end of 10 years, through use of new buildings or upgrading. The bill includes hiring an appropriate staff member, presumably within RIDE, to support and oversee the processes of planning and meeting the specified standards.

The Environment Council believes that healthy energy efficient schools should be the standard for all Rhode Island children and that Rep Cortvriend's Bill provides the means for achieving this goal. It is time to proceed.

We urge the Committee to approve 5203 and move it on to a floor vote.
Thank you for considering our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PG Trafton".

Peter Trafton, MD
Co-VP of Policy, Environment Council of Rhode Island