

March 5, 2026

House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Testimony in Opposition to Budget Article 11, Sections 3 and 8

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Joel Singley, and I am an environmental scientist and professor at Roger Williams University, where I study watershed processes and climate impacts on ecosystems and water resources. I also teach students about climate science and environmental data, and I am the parent of a young child growing up in this state. Given my professional expertise and personal stake in Rhode Island's future, I urge you to keep Rhode Island on track to meet its climate commitments by rejecting the provisions in Budget Article 11 that would significantly weaken our clean energy policies.

Governor McKee's proposed FY2027 budget would set back Rhode Island's clean energy progress. Article 11, Section 8 would delay the Renewable Energy Standard by 17 years, undermining one of the strongest clean electricity policies in the country and a central mechanism for achieving the Act on Climate emissions targets. The existing 100% renewable electricity by 2033 requirement provides a clear signal that drives investment in new clean energy projects, expands local energy supply, and reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels with volatile prices.

Rhode Island currently relies heavily on natural gas for electricity generation and imports essentially all of that fuel. This dependence exposes residents to price volatility and supply costs that are largely outside the state's control. Expanding renewable energy helps diversify our energy supply and stabilize long-term energy costs while reducing climate pollution and risks to the ecosystems we depend on.

The proposal would also cap energy efficiency programs (Article 11, Section 3). Energy efficiency remains the most immediate and cost-effective tool available to lower energy demand and reduce costs for households. These programs have saved ratepayers millions of dollars while reducing system-wide electricity demand and the need for expensive new infrastructure.

As a scientist, educator, and parent, I believe Rhode Island should be strengthening rather than weakening policies that support a stable climate, affordable energy, and a resilient economy. I respectfully urge the committee to reject these provisions and maintain Rhode Island's commitment to strong, science-informed climate policy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Joel Singley, PhD
Assistant Professor of Environmental Science
Roger Williams University
Bristol, RI