

Trafton testimony in behalf of the Environment Council of Rhode Island opposing the Governor's Budget Amendment #7, H7125 and article 11 sections 10, 7 and 8. Before the House Finance Committee, May 6, 2026.

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

I'm Peter Trafton from Providence. I am a member and officer of the Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI). After thorough consideration, we have chosen opposition to the Governor's energy affordability programs **as one of our four Top Legislative Priorities for this session**. Please help us correct this rejection of the Act on Climate.

The governor has noticed that many Rhode Islanders are upset by the costs of electrical energy as revealed by their monthly electric utility bills. He claims to be solving this with a package of "affordability" measures. We think he misunderstands why electricity costs are rising. Further, his attempts to address these bills are inappropriate.

Clean energy is less expensive than energy produced from fossil fuels. We must switch.

He limits his efforts to the 20% of the bill connected to state policies and tells us he can't do anything about the 80% of the bill that is driving the rising costs – electricity supply, transmission and distribution. That's where the money is. Short-term adjustments of public policies and taxes have limited effect and limited duration. That's why what he is offering begins with a reduction of \$20-\$30 a month from bills that often exceed \$300 a month.

Perhaps that's why he talks about a \$1 billion accomplishment without mentioning that it's only 200 million per year for 5 years and that it's distributed over half a million customers (500,000). The monthly benefits offered by the governor's program are actually pretty trivial. And you may have noticed that Rhode Island Energy is requesting higher rates to begin in September.

We must move as quickly as possible from fossil fuel power to renewable energy.

Article 11, section 7 and 8 concern the Renewable Energy Standard. The Gov.'s changes delay the stimulus for increasing our clean energy production – and they do so significantly. They remove ¼ of the proposed renewables and replace them with expensive nuclear power and hydroelectricity from reservoirs and dams in Canada, where rainfall is rapidly decreasing. The Governor prolongs our progress to hundred percent renewable electricity from 2033 to 2050 – 17 more years to pay for fossil fuels. Fossil fuel prices are steadily rising while solar energy, battery backups, and wind energy costs decrease steadily. It would be foolish for us to delay the Renewable Energy Standard and the Act on Climate. It will cost more, and for many years.

Article 11 section 10 has been improved from the governor's initial proposal. It will not kill off our solar energy development, but it is not enough to get where we need to.

Another significant problem with GBA # 7 is that it fails completely to expand energy efficiency programs that reduce our costs of electricity. Regrettably, he has ignored the recommendations of the Rhode Island Energy Efficiency and Resource Management Council and the efficiency program cost-effectiveness reports, while our state's energy efficiency scores, once among the very best in the US, fall steadily. So, we trade off energy saving for a few short-term bucks.

Since the governor's budget amendment and related policies do not address the cause of our rising utility bills, we urge this committee to block its passage of the energy affordability sections of H7127, Article 11 until its problems are corrected.

Thanks very much for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Trafton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter Trafton

Co-VP for Policy

The Environment Council of Rhode Island