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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say UNION YES.

May 7, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SUPPORT for HB7695 - *An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – Rhode Island Commerce Corporation*

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing more than 80,000 union members and their families across Rhode Island, we write in support of House Bill 7695 introduced by Chairman Bennet. This bill creates a competitive framework to attract data center investment to Rhode Island, while ensuring strong labor standards that support both local jobs and the economy.

Data centers are an increasingly important part of the digital economy, supporting industries such as healthcare, finance, education, and emergency services. Nationally, employment in the data center sector has grown significantly in recent years. However, during the same period, Rhode Island's data center employment declined by more than 75 percent, placing the state last in the nation in sector growth.

Across the country, thirty-nine states, including neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut, have adopted policies to attract data center investment. Without passage of HB7695, Rhode Island risks missing out on significant economic development opportunities.

This bill helps address this challenge by establishing a targeted incentive program through Rhode Island Commerce to attract large-scale data center investments that meet substantial capital thresholds. These projects often represent hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment and include significant construction activity through both construction and operations and maintenance phases.

A data center project in Rhode Island would represent meaningful job opportunities for the thousands of tradespeople across the Building and Construction Trades. In the construction phase of a single large-scale data center we estimate more than 1,600 construction jobs that would generate substantial wages and economic activity within the local economy.

Importantly, this legislation includes labor standards requiring prevailing wages, apprenticeship utilization, and labor peace agreements. These standards help ensure that the economic benefits of these projects support Rhode Island's skilled workforce and create high-quality jobs in the construction industry. We recommend coupling this bill with House Bill 7331, introduced by Speaker Pro Tempore Kennedy and heard in the House Corporations Committee on April 7, 2026.

Patrick Crowley [President](#) • Karen Hazard [Secretary-Treasurer](#)
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HB7331 provides important safeguards to ensure that the growth of this industry does not shift infrastructure costs onto Rhode Island ratepayers. This bill requires that data centers cover the costs of any electric generation, transmission, or distribution upgrades necessary to serve their facilities. It also establishes reporting and oversight related to water use and allows state regulators to require conservation or recycling plans where appropriate. These guardrails help to ensure responsible resource management as this industry develops.

For these reasons the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, supports both of these bills and we respectfully urge the Committee to support their passage.

Respectfully submitted,



Erica A. Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO