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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey  
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of HB5967** – An Act Relating to Taxation – Levy And Assessment Of Local Taxes

Dear Chair Casey and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing over 80,000 union members across the state. I write to express our support for House Bill 5967, introduced by Representative Speakman.

This legislation builds on years of dedicated advocacy and collaboration amongst labor, environmental, business, and government leaders to advance local renewable energy projects while safeguarding our surrounding environment and ecosystems. Just two years ago we worked together to pass historic Solar Siting legislation (HB5853/SB684), which amended R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-26.4 and sought to protect our state's core forests while advancing our renewable energy goals. In doing so, we understood that by prohibiting solar development in underdeveloped areas, we'd need to maximize development on preferred sites, such as brownfields, landfills, and other previously contaminated areas.

Last year, to continue this advocacy, we supported the passage of the Renewable Ready Program (HB7616/SB2293), which established R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-140.5, and incentivizes the redevelopment of previously contaminated sites to advance renewable energy generating resources and facilities. However, we had not accounted for the municipalities with existing restrictions and solar moratoriums that would undermine the core intention behind both the solar siting legislation and the Renewable Ready Program.

HB5967 aims to close this loophole, by advancing the development of solar projects on brownfields, by streamlining local zoning for such projects, avoiding the kind of land-use conflicts that can otherwise stall renewable energy projects. It creates a pathway for putting current or formally contaminated land back to productive use in a way that benefits not only our local communities, but also our broader environmental and renewable energy goals.

This approach is a win-win for Rhode Island workers, specifically the highly skilled tradespeople in the building and construction trades. Brownfield redevelopment often presents more complex and labor-intensive challenges than building on undeveloped land. This translates directly into high-quality job opportunities in construction, environmental remediation, and ongoing operations and system maintenance. By encouraging solar and other renewable installations on these sites, we can put skilled tradespeople to work revitalizing areas that have too often been left behind.

The bill also brings greater clarity and consistency to how municipalities handle renewable energy installations, particularly in terms of zoning and tax treatment. While this clarity is important to developers and local governments alike, our chief interest lies in how it facilitates investment in the kinds of projects that put our members to work while advancing the state's climate and clean energy goals.

Patrick Crowley [President](#) • Karen Hazard [Secretary-Treasurer](#)  
Cheryl Masciarelli [Office Manager](#) • Autumn Guillotte [Political Director](#) • Erica Hammond [Legislative Director](#)



House Bill 5967 enables Rhode Island to grow its renewable energy economy in a responsible, equitable, and economically sustainable way and for each of these reasons, I urge the committee to support its passage. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-751-7100 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erica A. Hammond", with a stylized, flowing script.

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