

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill No. 2658 (Plug-in Solar)

FROM: Bill Ibelle, co-chair CARI Politics Team
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Dear Chairman Sosnowski and members of the committee:

This bill helps us meet our climate goals with **no cost to the state, and no cost to ratepayers**. In fact, it will save participants more money on their electric bills than the governor's entire package of environmental program cuts combined.

But that's not all. This bill addresses a host of high-priority needs in addition to its environmental benefits. For example:

Equity

Plug-in solar will democratize residential solar by providing an option that is within the financial reach of almost everyone. While rooftop solar produces far more electricity and saves consumers more money over time, the up-front cost for purchase and professional installation runs about \$25,000. In contrast, a plug-in unit costs about \$500. While it won't run an entire household, it will reduce energy bills substantially by reducing the amount of energy you have to buy from the grid. Units pay for themselves in 3-5 years and last 20 years. An added advantage for renters is that they can take the units with them when they move.

Simplicity

With plug-in solar, you don't have to pay an electrician or specialized installation company. You just buy a certified unit in a retail store, plug it into a standard electric socket, and set up the panel. It takes an average person about 15 minutes to set up. It's that simple.

Safety

Plug-in solar has been used for years by more than a million households across Europe without any significant safety concerns. The proposed legislation requires Rhode Islanders to use units that have been safety-certified by the Underwriters Laboratory.

Economy

Plug-in solar will help lower electric rates by reducing our dependence on natural gas, which is the real cause of soaring electric bills. Prices for natural gas are spiking while the price of clean energy has been declining for more than a decade. The federal Energy Information Administration predicts a 20% increase in the price of natural gas this year and again in 2027. Yet natural gas is the fuel used for 84% of the electricity produced in Rhode Island. Given the rapid escalation in fossil fuel prices, it would be foolish to continue our reliance on natural gas. The building decarbonization program is the most cost-effective way to solve this costly imbalance.

Common sense

- 1) If the price of natural gas is skyrocketing, and the price for clean energy has been dropping for more than a decade, it makes no sense to kill a no-cost bill that will hasten our transition to clean energy.
- 2) The war in Iran dramatically illustrates the volatility of fossil fuel prices and their vulnerability to world events.
- 3) It's no coincidence that Rhode Island has the second-highest dependence on natural gas in the country—and also has the nation's fourth-highest electric rates.

Energy of the future

Europe, China, India, and Brazil are all transitioning to clean energy because it's cheaper and because it's the energy of the future. Continuing to invest in energy produced by fossil fuels is like investing in stage coaches after the invention of the automobile, or buying stock in a typewriter company in the age of computers.

This bill is also part of a priority legislation package designed by Climate Action RI to move us forward on our climate goals and reduce electric rates with **virtually no cost** to the state or ratepayers.

In a year when the response to climate legislation is either “We have no money” or “Rates are already too high,” this legislative package provides an affordable solution.

Bill	Cost		Summary	Bill # and sponsors
	Ratepayers	State		
Solar Cost Reduction Act	None	None	Reduces the cost of solar energy by eliminating unnecessary red tape	S2801 H7726 Valverde / Boylan
Plug-in solar	None	None	Allows residents to use safety-certified plug-in solar panels.	S2359 H7269 Valverde / Speakman
Next Generation Buildings	None	None	Prohibits fossil fuel heating in new municipal buildings	S2529 H7081 Urso / Boylan
Benchmarking (large buildings)	None	Minimal	Step 1: Requires owners of large buildings to provide energy use data to an automated data base.	S2260 H7183 Kallman / Kislak
Performance Standards (large buildings)	None	Moderate	Step 2: Sets emissions reduction requirements for large buildings.	S2218 H718 Kallman / Kislak