



April 15, 2026

The Honorable V. Susan Sosnowski, Chair
Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee
Rhode Island Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2801 – AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- SOLAR COST REDUCTION ACT

Chair Sosnowski and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 2801, which seeks to modernize the State’s existing online E-Permitting Portal by incorporating automated plan review, enabling instant permit issuance for eligible residential and small-scale solar energy systems, and authorizing remote virtual inspections for typical rooftop installations. The League would like to thank the sponsors for taking the time to thoughtfully consider the perspective and input of Rhode Island’s municipalities. That collaboration has been valuable in shaping a proposal that recognizes both the need for efficiency and the realities of local permitting operations.

Municipalities across Rhode Island recognize that, even when residential solar projects meet all applicable safety and building codes, the current permitting process can be unnecessarily burdensome. Challenges include wide variation in municipal permitting timelines, manual plan review requirements for routine rooftop systems, unnecessary requirements for stamped engineering drawings, scheduling delays associated with in-person inspections, and slow utility “permission to operate” processes. These bottlenecks contribute to increased costs for residents and businesses without improving safety outcomes. As a result, administrative and permitting “soft costs” make up a growing share of overall solar installation expenses.

Senate Bill 2801 presents a practical and forward-looking solution by establishing automated plan review for qualifying systems, allowing for instant permit issuance for code-compliant projects, reducing unnecessary and duplicative documentation, authorizing remote virtual inspections where appropriate, preventing redundant reviews, and encouraging more timely utility approvals. The bill also provides a statewide smart solar permitting framework that municipalities may utilize at no cost, while still allowing flexibility to use an equivalent local system.

The League appreciates that this legislation is carefully structured to preserve municipal authority and public safety. It does not change building, electrical, or fire codes; it does not reduce safety standards or inspection requirements; it does not alter local zoning authority or municipal authority to set permit fees; and it does not replace local inspectors. Instead, this bill focuses on improving efficiency and consistency for routine, code-compliant projects, where modernization can provide meaningful benefits without compromising oversight.

Senate Bill 2801 represents a balanced approach that supports clean energy deployment while reducing administrative burdens on municipalities and applicants alike. By streamlining predictable, low-risk permitting processes, this legislation can help lower costs, improve turnaround times, and enhance the overall effectiveness of local permitting systems.

We appreciate the Committee's thoughtful review and thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee