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

April 15, 2026

Chair Susan Sosnowski
Senate Environment and Agriculture
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony SB2801 – An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Solar Cost Reduction Act

Dear Chair Sosnowski and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO representing 80,000 union members and 275 affiliated local unions, I write in partial support of Senate Bill 2801 the Solar Cost Reduction Act. This bill would modernize Rhode Island's solar permitting system by requiring automated plan review and instant permits for code-compliant residential systems.

We are in complete alignment that continued investment in solar development is critical to meeting both our Act on Climate mandates and the Renewable Energy Standard. And while we agree, it is in the best interest of the state, municipalities, rate payers, and business owners to eliminate unnecessary barriers and red tape in the development of these projects. We must be careful not to eliminate any steps throughout the permit process that undercut the safety of both consumers and the general public.

Our sole concern with SB2801 is the allowance of virtual inspections. An inspection must be conducted in-person, with a qualified inspector on-site to maintain the integrity of the work performed. The effectiveness of virtual inspections can be affected by the limitations of the technology used, such as photograph or video software. This could lead to gaps in safety and procedure that put not only workers at risk, but also consumers and the surrounding community.

For those reasons, we offer our partial support for Senate Bill 2801 and look forward to discussing this further with the sponsor and stakeholders. Upon the removal of the virtual inspections component, we'd be in full support of this legislation. I thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-751-7100.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erica A. Hammond'.

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

