

Testimony opposing Article 11 Section 3 and Article 11 Section 7 of H7127

Dear Chair DiPalma and members of the Senate Finance Committee

It makes no sense to gut a host of successful climate programs that will help control energy rates for years to come, just to save ratepayers a few dollars this year.

These are short-sighted proposals that are driven by election-year politics. They are a quick fix that won't fix anything. In fact, they make the situation worse because they lock us into our over-dependence on natural gas, which is the real cause of soaring energy rates.

We all know that the cheapest energy is the energy you don't have to buy. If you make your home or business more efficient, you don't have to buy as much energy—and that's what all of these programs are designed to do.

Consider this:

- 1) Insulating a house can save 15% a year in energy consumption, according to the EPA.
- 2) Heat pumps are 2-4 times more efficient than gas furnaces.
- 3) Energy rates spike every winter because we need to activate the most expensive fossil fuel plants in order to meet winter demand. If we invest in new sources of renewable energy, we won't have to fire up those expensive plants, which will reduce winter rates dramatically.

The governor wants to create the impression that these programs are the cause of high electric rates, even though they constitute a small portion of the bill. He ignores the real culprit, which is our overdependence on natural gas. If you doubt this statement, consider this:

- 1) The states that are the most dependent on natural gas—and RI is first on that list—have the highest electric rates, while those with a high percentage of renewables have the lowest rates.
- 2) If 87% of the energy generated in Rhode Island is produced with natural gas, it's absurd to blame high rates on wind and solar.

Here's another thing to consider: 100% of the natural gas used in Rhode Island comes out of state—which means all that money is flowing out of state. In contrast, wind and solar local and keep all that money in Rhode Island—which means that instead of supporting jobs in Texas and Pennsylvania, they will create jobs in Rhode Island.

And consider this: The price of fossil fuels is rising and is expected to continue to rise, while the price of clean energy has been dropping steadily for a decade. That's why Europe, China, India, Brazil, and other first-world countries are switching to clean energy.

By slowing our transition to clean energy, the governor's budget locks us into an antiquated 20th-century system at a time when we should be investing in 21st-century system that will control costs into the future. That's what these programs do.

The question before you is simple:

Do you want to hitch your wagon to an energy source that is getting more expensive, or one that is getting cheaper? Do you want to hitch your wagon to energy that is clean, or energy that's dirty? Do you want to hitch your wagon to the energy of the future, or the energy of the past?

It is up to you to decide.

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