

Senator DiPalma, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island Senate

February 10th, 2026

RE: Green Energy Consumers Alliance Supports Budget Article 3, Section 16 in H7127 (Fiscal Year 2027 Budget)

Dear Chair DiPalma and members of the committee,

On behalf of Green Energy Consumers Alliance and our thousands of members across Rhode Island, **I write in strong support of Budget Article 3, Section 16 in House Bill 7127 (Fiscal Year 2027 Budget)** which seeks to create a state facilities benchmarking and performance standards program.

Rhode Island Must Remain on Track to Achieve Act on Climate Goals

The Act on Climate mandates that Rhode Island reduce its total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 45% by 2030 and net zero by 2050. According to the 2025 Climate Action Strategy (CAS), approved by the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) in December 2025, Rhode Island is approximately on track to meet the 2030 AOC target under current existing policies. We would like to note that our assessment is that the EC4 report is overly optimistic in the achievable emissions reductions and that new policies are needed to meet the mandate. Creating a state facilities benchmarking and performances standards program would ensure that state facilities lead by example to track, report, and reduce energy usage and contribute to long-term emissions reductions.

Figure 3: Economy-wide GHG Emissions Under the Current Policy Scenario

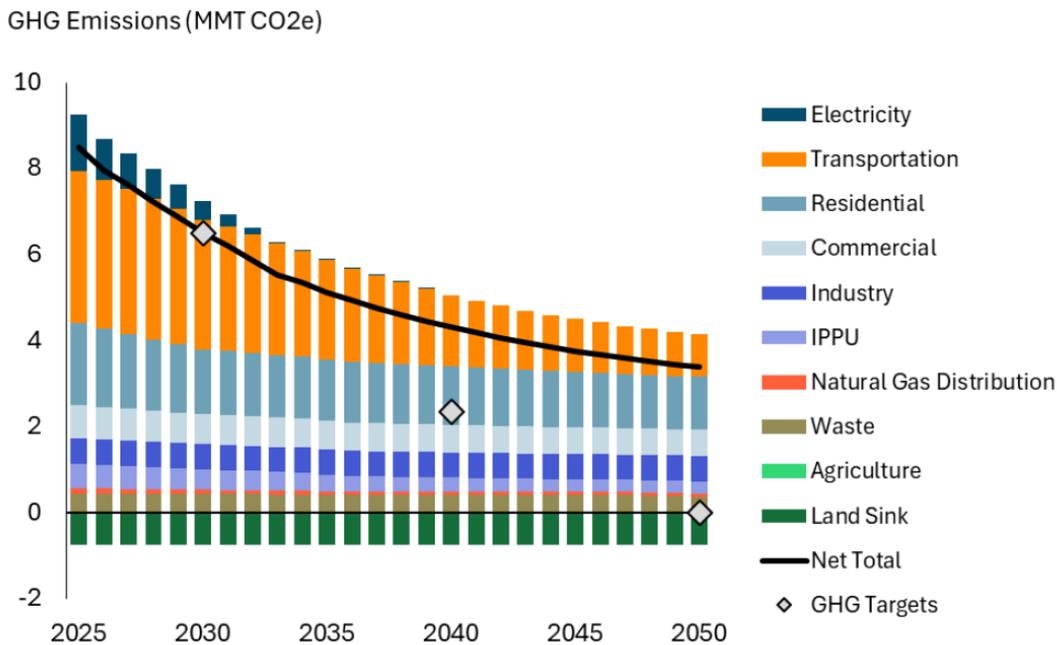
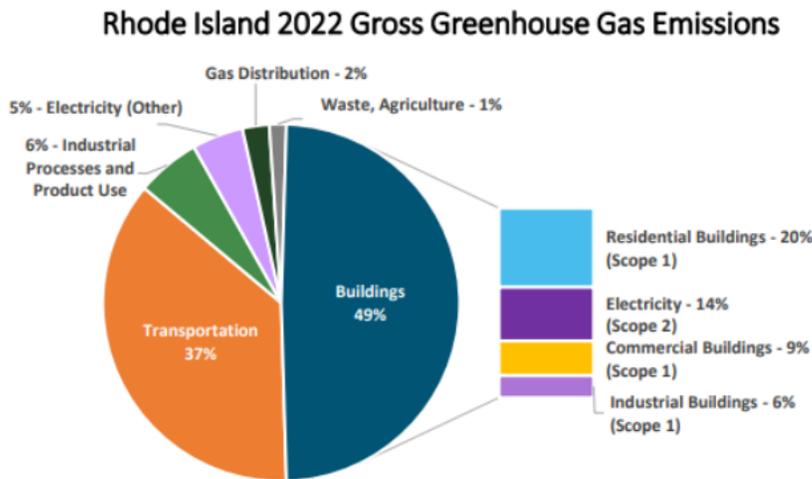


Image from 2025 Rhode Island Climate Action Strategy, pg. 12.

The [Building Benchmarking and Performance Standards report](#) required by Joint Resolution 7617 Substitute A (2024) found that buildings contribute 49% of Rhode Island’s 2022 Gross Greenhouse Gas Emissions when including both Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, as shown in the image below. Rhode Island still lacks a policy to address emissions from our large existing buildings and cannot make progress towards driving down these emissions without a framework like Article 3 Section 16 would provide.

APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES AND FIGURES



Note: The emissions breakdown presented in this figure differs from the official accounting framework used by DEM to in the *Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Inventory*.

Figure 4: Rhode Island Gross Greenhouse Gas Emissions Breakdown, 2022³⁷

Image from Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council report: *Building Energy Benchmarking and Performance Standards*, Appendix 1 Figure 4.

Contributing to the total percentage of building greenhouse gas emissions in the pie chart is 14% from building electricity usage, and we would like to point out that because of Rhode Island’s current 100% Renewable Energy Standard (RES), the electricity supplied to buildings will become cleaner over time, culminating in 100% renewable in 2033. This means that building emissions reductions are built in due to the RES without requiring building owners to take any action. This automatic reduction indicates it may be easier than anticipated for building owners to start reducing their emissions. This is also why maintaining the current RES is critical for building sector emissions reductions.

Since 2020, residential heating emissions have risen in Rhode Island, from [1.91 MMCO₂e in 2020](#) to [2.04 MMTCO₂e in 2023](#), further indicating that the state is not yet on the right path towards emissions reductions in the building sector. To achieve the Act on Climate, essentially all buildings by 2050 must be carbon-free, and retrofitting existing buildings will be key as 70% of our building stock in 2050 is already in place today. A State Facilities Benchmarking and Performance Standards

Program as outlined in Article 3 Section 16 is the first step Rhode Island must take to begin tackling emissions from our building sector.

Rhode Island has Acknowledged the Importance of Benchmarking and Performance Standards.

Rhode Island joined the [U.S. Climate Alliance](#) on September 21st, 2023, and through this coalition the state committed to advance and accelerate building decarbonization measures. A key measure is exploring the adoption of building performance standards, yet Rhode Island has not made progress towards adoption of performance standards, other than the EC4 report passed through Joint Resolution 7617 discussed below.

In December 2024, the EC4 released their report prepared by the Office of Energy Resources (OER) "*Joint Resolution 7617 Substitute A: Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council Report on Building Energy Benchmarking and Performance Standards*" where it was recommended that the Office of Energy Resources should "lead a public sector program for a select range of large state-owned and state-occupied properties that could serve as the basis for expanded programming for municipal and private buildings in the future" (RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council, 2025, p. 27). This recommendation indicates OER approval of this budget article and that it would be beneficial for the General Assembly to approve this proposal.

In Article 3 Section 16, we are encouraged by the timeline and capacity outlined to implement this budget article. However, we feel that the state can and must have a wider scope of buildings included in a benchmarking and performance standards program to drive down emissions at the scale necessary to meet the Act on Climate goals.

Expansion of The State Facilities Benchmarking and Performance Standards Program to Include S2260: The Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026.

Passage of Section 3 Article 16 of the Governor's proposed FY 2027 Budget is the first step Rhode Island must take to begin reducing emissions from select state facilities, however it only covers a small portion of the buildings in the state that must begin benchmarking their energy usage in preparation for performance standards to reduce emissions from our large buildings and will not reduce building emissions at the scale needed to meet our Act on Climate goals. The State can learn from the path the City of Providence blazed in their "Building Energy Reporting Ordinance" which requires owners of large buildings to report their energy usage to the City. The City's [report](#) from their first year of compliance was released in December 2024 and outlines the success they have had with the program, notably 100% compliance.

We urge that [S2260: The Building Benchmarking and Reporting Act of 2026](#) be incorporated in Article 3 Section 16 of the Governor's proposed FY 2027 budget to more comprehensively address emissions from our large buildings in Rhode Island. This bill has a much more inclusive scope for buildings that must collect and report their energy usage data and be compliant with building performance standards that will have a significant impact on reducing our state greenhouse gas emissions as required by law. S2260 would start by establishing a benchmarking program and first

require public facilities greater than 25,000 square feet to report their energy use information. This allows the state to lead by example with covered properties greater than 50,000 square feet and then covered properties greater than 25,000 square feet to begin benchmarking and reporting their energy usage data before building performance standards are established and introduced.

If Not a Benchmarking and Performance Standards Program, Then What?

Though Rhode Island's building stock contributes to a significant share of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, the state has yet to implement any policies to address these emissions. Passage of Act 3 Section 16 of the Governor's proposed FY 2027 budget will start to address emissions from the building sector. The state cannot afford to continue to delay reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our large buildings.

Benchmarking and subsequent building performance standards can save building owners money over time and can ensure that investments into retrofitting are done in a way that aligns with state climate goals. 'Retrofits of regret' can be avoided when carefully planning building upgrades and replacements and considering the net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 mandate laid out in the Act on Climate. There are existing programs intended to help support building improvement projects, like the Efficient Buildings Fund (EBF) which, over the lifetime of the fund, has loaned "out over \$75 million dollars to support a variety of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. These will deliver approximately \$110 million in savings over the lifetime of the installed measures." ([Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council](#), 2025, p. 31).

These data points show that energy efficiency saves money and reduces greenhouse gas emissions from our large buildings in the state. Creating a more comprehensive benchmarking and building performance standards program will only serve to further benefit more building owners and ensure that all large building owners understand how benchmarking building energy usage will save money and create healthier buildings over time.

Conclusion

To achieve the requirements of an Act on Climate, Rhode Island must pass policies that will continue to reduce emissions from our most polluting sectors. A state facilities benchmarking and performance standards program is the first step towards addressing building sector emissions in a holistic manner.

Green Energy Consumers Alliance urges the committee to support Article 3, Section 16 of House Bill 7127.

Sincerely,

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