



Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Chair DiPalma and members of the Committee,

My name is Avery Robertson and I am writing as the Assistant Director of Climate Action RI and a resident of Newport, Rhode Island. I am submitting testimony in strong support of Senate Bill No. 2024, The RI Climate Superfund Act of 2026.

The climate crisis is ever worsening, and with it the costs of paying for the damages it causes. We know who is majorly responsible for this crisis, and still they have yet to face any consequences for this. At a time when the federal government outright denies the existence of climate change and is upholding a system that continues to benefit big oil, states must step up and take real meaningful action.

This law would specifically hold big fossil fuel companies like Exxon, Shell, and BP financially accountable for the real damages caused by their climate pollution. While these companies were “lawfully” allowed to pollute for decades, as the American Petroleum Institute claims, that was [based on their own deception](#). These companies knew the impacts of their product for decades and intentionally kept that [information from the public](#) because they knew it would cut into their profits. Today, the world’s top 100 oil and gas companies continue to trade our shared planet for their profit, just this year making more than [\\$30 million every hour](#) in unearned profit in the first month of the US-Israeli war in Iran alone. While these companies continue to grow their profits, extreme climate events are [costing the U.S. \\$150 billion](#) each year – an estimate that doesn't account for loss of life, healthcare-related costs, and damage to our environment, and that cost will grow with time. Right now, American families and our local and state governments are paying not only the exorbitant costs of living—which are exacerbated by the global conflicts that drive the price of fossil fuels—but the ever-increasing costs of climate damages.

The recently released [Resilient Rhody Report](#), our first Statewide Coastal Resilience Plan, estimates that the funding to realize the actions it outlines, largely for protecting our coastal communities from climate impacts, ranges between \$119 million to \$298 million (and that's excluding implementation and construction costs). The costs to build resilience and protect our communities from climate impacts will only increase with time. This Climate Superfund Act would require fossil fuel companies responsible for more than 1 billion tons of emissions between 1990 and 2025 to pay for cleanup and damages caused by their emissions, based on the proportion of emissions they contributed. The funds collected would be used by the state to pay for climate

change response work. That work includes coastal and flood protection and resilience projects, Stormwater management, ecosystem protection projects, resilience transportation, energy system resilience, and more.

While we are concerned about how Rhode Island is going to afford to expand renewable energy, support energy efficiency, and build climate resilient infrastructure, we should be looking to who not only caused this damage but clearly has the money to pay for it—and that's not the Rhode Island taxpayers. Every dollar from polluters is a dollar that doesn't come from taxpayers. By shifting the cost of climate-related damages away from the consumer and onto big corporate companies, we are also putting money back into the state economy, so people can afford to shop at our stores, eat at our restaurants, and purchase our services.

The Climate Superfund Act is urgently needed to shift the burden of paying for these damages onto the companies responsible for them, in order to protect the health, environment and economic future of our communities. I urge you to bring Bill No. 2024 to a vote and support its passing in 2026.

Sincerely,

Avery Robertson

Assistant Director, Climate Action RI

261 Gibbs Ave, Newport RI 02840