



April 1, 2026

The Hon. Louis DiPalma

Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

State House

Providence, RI 02908

Support: S-3132 – Relating to Highways – Relocation of Utility Services

Dear Chairman DiPalma:

On behalf of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, I write in strong support of S-3132, which would reduce cost burdens that are, today, shifted to electric and natural gas distribution customers from the relocation of utility facilities necessitated by highway construction projects.

In 2022, RIGL §24-8.1-2 was amended in a manner that slashed the reimbursement rate for utility facility relocation projects necessitated by highway construction from 100% to 50%. Because those costs are ultimately recoverable from local utility customers, the 2022 amendments have resulted in shifting costs once paid for by federal and other highway dollars to local utility customers.

Rhode Island Energy estimates that this change in law has exposed electric and natural gas distribution customers to \$8 million in new costs that might otherwise have been paid by leveraging federal highway dollars. These costs, which now must be paid for by Rhode Island businesses and their employees, are subject to regulatory oversight and are recoverable through rates charged to business and

residential customers. Sadly, this burden will continue to grow unless the full reimbursement rate is restored. S-3132 does just that.

The public dialogue around energy affordability has fostered an important opportunity to revisit certain policy choices and assess their impact on local utility customers to determine whether prudent adjustments can provide relief without jeopardizing the safe and reliable delivery of energy. This is one of those policies warranting change.

I respectfully urge the Committee to advance this legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Laurie White

President

Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce