

April 4, 2018

Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Legislators,

The undersigned organizations and individuals – representing business, community, consumer, low-income, public health, environmental, and clean energy interests – write to **strongly oppose any proposals that undermine Rhode Island’s cost-effective energy efficiency programs**. Energy efficiency is a highly successful economic strategy with a strong return on investment.

**Rhode Island’s energy efficiency programs generate immense economic value for the state.** They bring hundreds of millions of dollars in electricity and natural gas bill savings to residents and businesses, drive our growing clean energy economy, help low-income families reduce the burden of high energy costs, and protect the health and prosperity of our local communities. In all, energy efficiency programs have provided \$2.3 billion in economic benefits in Rhode Island since 2008.

**Rhode Island’s energy efficiency programs create and support local jobs.** Energy efficiency makes up the largest portion of the state’s clean energy industry, employing nearly 9,000 workers. In 2016, 923 firms delivered energy efficiency services in Rhode Island, 82% of them local. Supporting energy efficiency means supporting local jobs and the economy.

**Undermining energy efficiency programs hurts low-income families.** Cuts to energy efficiency programs would fall hardest on the neediest households already struggling to manage Rhode Island’s high energy costs. Currently, income-eligible residents can qualify for free energy audits, weatherization services, and other important upgrades that help them save money. Rhode Island’s low-income residents deserve continued strong access to the energy efficiency programs that are their best protection against high energy costs.

**Energy efficiency mitigates environmental and climate change impacts.** By reducing overall energy consumption through efficiency, Rhode Island is also cutting polluting emissions that exacerbate climate change impacts. Between 2006 and 2016, Rhode Island’s efficiency programs have avoided over 7 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. This supports the goals of the 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. Efficiency programs protect Rhode Island from rising seas and extreme weather events associated with climate change.

**Energy efficiency is Rhode Island’s “first fuel” and its lowest-cost energy resource.** The General Assembly has unanimously recognized through the Least Cost Procurement law that the electric and natural gas distribution utility must invest in the lowest-cost energy resource – energy efficiency – before more expensive out-of-state energy supplies. By prioritizing Least Cost Procurement, Rhode Island has reduced total energy costs for all residents and businesses by \$1 billion, mitigated the adverse impact of fuel and electricity price increases, helped avoid unnecessary transmission infrastructure, and built a more affordable, reliable and cleaner energy system for all consumers.

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose any artificial caps on either the system benefit charge (as proposed in Senate Bill 2499 and House Bill 7808) or the overall budget of the efficiency programs. Likewise, we oppose any raids by the General Assembly or other bodies of the efficiency funds, which are paid for by Rhode Island residents and businesses. Limitations on the energy efficiency programs that do not adhere to the spirit of Least Cost Procurement are a disservice to Rhode Island ratepayers. We strongly endorse the prioritization of cost-effective efficiency strategies over the purchase of additional imported energy supply.

We hope you will continue to support cost-effective energy efficiency programs in Rhode Island for the many consumer, economic, and environmental benefits they provide. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,