

August 18, 2025

Toby Ast
Project Manager, Customer Programs
Rhode Island Energy

RE: Comments on Second Draft of 2026 Annual Energy Efficiency Plan

Dear Toby,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and feedback on the second draft of Rhode Island Energy's 2026 Annual Energy Efficiency Plan.

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) labor unions, environmental, and community organizations committed to making Rhode Island a national leader in building a resilient 21st-century economy through a Just Transition, that centers frontline communities and workers. Our members range from the workers and crews that implement and deliver these energy efficiency programs in the field and have maintained our energy systems for decades, to the families and households who benefit from the comfort, savings, and healthier living environments these programs provide.

We sincerely appreciate the company's long-standing investments in energy efficiency and the measurable impacts these programs have delivered. Because those impacts have been so significant, this is not the time to scale them back. Energy efficiency is Rhode Island's least cost resource for meeting the mandates of the 2021 Act on Climate and continues to be one of the most effective tools the state has to protect working families from rising energy costs.

At a time when Rhode Islanders are facing some of the highest electricity bills in the country, these programs help households lower their energy use, save money, and improve comfort year after year. Cutting program funding may provide the appearance of a short-term bill adjustment, but in the long run it will drive costs up by reducing access to the very measures that permanently lower bills and reduce consumption. Compared to the current three-year plan, this budget includes a nearly 30% cut to energy efficiency, which will only further exacerbate cost, climate, and equity challenges.

Beyond household savings, energy efficiency programs create and sustain good, local, union jobs. The workforce impacts of these cuts are also significant. In 2024, Rhode Island Energy reported that efficiency programs supported an estimated 740 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs. The proposed 2026 budget, about 22% lower than 2024 spending, would translate to just 574 FTE jobs, a loss of roughly 166 good-paying local jobs. These are electricians, HVAC

technicians, weatherization crews, and various other skilled tradespeople whose livelihoods depend on this work to support their families. Undermining energy efficiency programs today risks not only immediate job losses, but also the long-term stability of the workforce pipeline needed to meet Rhode Island's climate and energy goals.

As Rhode Island accelerates its clean energy transition, we must be investing in, not retreating from the very workforce that will make it possible. Energy efficiency is a proven pathway to recruit, train, and employ the workers that are essential to our energy future. Weakening this sector now leaves Rhode Island less prepared to meet its climate mandates, and less able to grow the good-paying union jobs that come with them.

We are also concerned about the messaging that these cuts will lower household energy bills. The reality is that without strong efficiency programs, customers are more exposed to future rate hikes from volatile wholesale energy markets, extreme weather, and infrastructure costs. Investing in energy efficiency now is one of the most cost-effective ways to ensure long-term energy affordability for RI residents.

For these reasons, we strongly urge Rhode Island Energy to maintain robust funding for energy efficiency in 2026 and beyond. Scaling back these programs risks undermining Rhode Island's progress towards the Act on Climate, raising long-term costs for working families, and harming the local workforce that is critical to building our clean energy future.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the continuing opportunity to provide input on these critical programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Audina Hanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Audina" and last name "Hanley" clearly distinguishable.