



The Building Decarbonization Act

1. The Building Benchmarking & Performance Improvement Act:

Tackles emissions from large existing buildings by requiring energy reporting. This bill would provide Rhode Island's building owners, state agencies, and policymakers with necessary data on emissions from large buildings to inform a building performance standard, by which said buildings must gradually reduce their emissions.

The building sector makes up 30% of all GHG emissions in the state, and we do not currently have a clear pathway to reduce these emissions. A building energy benchmarking requirement and subsequent standard is the number one policy we can implement this year to address emissions from large existing buildings. Tackling these emissions is critical to achieve The Act on Climate's mandate of net-zero by 2050 as around 70% of our building stock then is already in place today.

Building Energy Reporting: Requires large buildings to report their energy usage and Greenhouse Gas Emissions to a central data repository such as ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, a free and secure EPA platform used by nearly half a million buildings nationwide.

- Buildings Covered by Reporting Requirements (estimated 2,320 total):
 - Starting 2025: Public buildings larger than 25,000 sq ft
 - Starting 2026: Private buildings larger than 50,000 sq ft
 - Starting 2027: Private buildings larger than 25,000 sq ft
- The data collected will:
 - Help building owners measure their emissions, compare with their neighbors, and implement ways to reduce their energy usage. This awareness alone leads to about 2% energy savings.
 - Enable the state to perform analyses and develop a standard by which large buildings must reduce their emissions.

Evaluation & Creation of a Building Performance Standard: Requires the Office of Energy Resources (OER) to evaluate benchmarking data, consult with stakeholders, and create a building performance standard for large buildings to reduce emissions in line with *An Act on Climate*.

- OER to analyze building energy data and publish reports

- OER to conduct stakeholder engagement including with building owners, energy efficiency industry, communities, small business orgs, and environmental justice orgs.
- OER to create a Building Performance Standard, which is a policy to address existing building emissions through setting long-term energy or emissions intensity targets, with interim compliance milestones.

Establishes Framework for Effective Programs: Designates the Green Building Advisory Committee (GBAC) established by RIGL 37-24-5(g) to advise the OER on the implementation of building performance standards. Requires the creation of an EJ Advisory Board (EJAB) to advise OER on the equitable creation and implementation of building performance standards. Also, OER is to estimate budgetary needs annually and provide to the General Assembly.

RI Would Follow Larger Markets

There are currently 6 states and 50 municipalities with Building energy benchmarking policies. 4 states, 1 county, and 7 municipalities have also adopted a Building Performance Standard with dozens more in development. In a small state such as Rhode Island, it makes the most sense to implement these policies on a statewide basis, in line with *An Act on Climate*. If we want to achieve *An Act on Climate*, we must reduce our emissions from large existing buildings. This legislation will put us on track to do that.

2. All-electric new construction

Addresses emissions from new construction by providing tiers by which it must become all electric to achieve *An Act on Climate*. The tiers are as follows:

- 1. Requirement for electric-ready construction of new buildings** Effective December 31st, 2024, all permits for new private construction or alterations must include an electrical system that provides sufficient capacity for a future retrofit of a mixed-fuel building to an all-electric building.
- 2. Requirement for all-electric construction of public buildings, including schools** Effective December 31st, 2024, all permits for new public construction or alterations must be all-electric. Includes labor standards and apprenticeship utilization requirements for public projects over a certain dollar amount.
- 3. Local approval of all-electric new construction** Effective immediately, through local approval municipalities can require that only permits for all-electric new construction and or alterations within their jurisdiction be issued.
- 4. Requirement for all-electric construction of new buildings** Effective December 31st, 2026, all permits for new construction of buildings statewide must be all-electric.

Provisions for Housing and Electricity Affordability: Requires that the Housing

Resources Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and the EJAB propose changes ensuring affordable housing is not compromised, while the Public Utilities Commission is directed to address electricity affordability, initiating a proceeding and establishing a percentage of income cap for low- and moderate-income customers in all-electric buildings.

Exemptions: If the building is specifically designated for occupancy by commercial or industrial uses which cannot feasibly operate using commercially available all-electric appliances. Specific exemptions for hospitals, medical facilities, or laboratories for biological research.

Contact

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