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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

A N A C T
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - RESILIENT RHODE ISLAND
ACT OF 2014 - CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL

Introduced By: Representatives Blazejewski, Abney, Bennett, Carson, and Ruggiero

Date Introduced: January 31, 2020

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Sections 42-6.2-1, 42-6.2-2, 42-6.2-3, 42-6.2-7 and 42-6.2-8 of the General
Laws in Chapter 42-6.2 entitled "Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 - Climate Change
Coordinating Council" are hereby amended to read as follows:

42-6.2-1. Creation -- Members.
There is hereby established within the executive branch of state government a Rhode
Island executive climate change coordinating council (the "council") comprised of officials from
state agencies with responsibility and oversight relating to assessing, integrating, and
coordinating climate change efforts. The council shall include, but not be limited to, the following
members: the director of the department of environmental management; the executive director of
the coastal resources management council; the director of the department of administration; the
director of the department of transportation; the director of the department of health; the director
of the emergency management agency; the commissioner of the office of energy resources; the
director of the division of planning; the executive director and chief executive officer of the
Rhode Island infrastructure bank; and the chief executive officer secretary of the Rhode Island
corps of engineers.

42-6.2-2. Purpose of the council.
(a) The council shall have the following duties:
(1) Assess, integrate, and coordinate climate change efforts throughout state agencies to
reduce emissions, strengthen the resilience of communities, and prepare for the effects of climate change, including, but not limited to, coordinating vulnerability assessments throughout state government;

(2)(i) No later than December 31, 2021, submit to the governor and general assembly a plan that includes strategies, programs, and actions to meet economy-wide enforceable levels for greenhouse gas emissions reductions as follows:

(A) Ten percent (10%) below 1990 levels by 2020;

(B) Forty-five percent (45%) Fifty percent (50%) below 1990 levels by 2035;

(C) Eighty percent (80%) Net-zero emissions below 1990 levels by 2050;

(D) The plan shall also include procedures and public metrics for periodic measurement, not less frequently than once every five (5) years, of progress necessary to meet these targets and for evaluating the possibility of meeting higher targets through cost-effective measures.

(ii) The plan shall specifically study the effectiveness of the state and/or multi-state carbon pricing program to incentivize institutions and industry to reduce carbon emissions. The study shall include the effectiveness of allocating revenues generated from such carbon pricing program to fund enhanced incentives to institutions and industry for targeted efficiency measures; projected emissions reductions; economic impact to businesses; any economic benefits to Rhode Island; and impacts to the state's economic competitiveness if the program were implemented.

(3) Advance the state's understanding of the effects of climate change including, but not limited to, sea level rise, coastal and shoreline changes, severe weather events, critical infrastructure vulnerability, and ecosystem, economic, and health impacts, including the effects of carbon pollution on children's health;

(4) Identify strategies to prepare for these effects and communicate them to Rhode Islanders, including strategies that incentivize businesses, institutions, and industry to adapt to climate change;

(5) Work with municipalities to support the development of sustainable and resilient communities;

(6) Identify and leverage federal, state, and private funding opportunities for emission reduction and climate change preparedness and adaption work in Rhode Island;

(7) Advise the governor, the general assembly, and the public on ways to ensure that Rhode Island continues to be a national leader in developing and implementing strategies that effectively address the challenges of climate change;

(8) Work with other New England states to explore areas of mutual interest to achieve common goals; and
(9) Identify and facilitate opportunities to educate the public about climate change and efforts throughout state agencies and municipalities to address climate change.

(b) The council is encouraged to utilize the expertise of Rhode Island universities and colleges in carrying out the duties described in subsection (a) of this section, specifically to ensure that the state's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change are based on the best available scientific and technical information, and to optimize the contribution by the universities and colleges of their expertise and experience in research, analysis, modeling, mapping, applications to on-the-ground situations, technical assistance, community outreach, and public education.


To support the council’s work, state agencies shall:

(1) Assist the council in implementing the provisions of this chapter;

(2) Develop short-and long-term greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies and track the progress of these strategies;

(3) To Lead by example and, to the maximum extent feasible, purchase alternative fuel, hybrid, and electric vehicles that produce lower total emissions of greenhouse gases and develop programs to encourage state employees to reduce their vehicle miles and use sustainable transportation alternatives, including public transit systems;

(4) Implement programs to achieve energy savings in state and municipal buildings to reduce greenhouse gases, reduce expenditures on energy, and stimulate economic and job development;

(5) Increase the deployment of in-state generation of renewable energy and energy efficiency;

(6) Support efforts to expand Rhode Island’s green economy and develop green infrastructure;

(7) Assess the vulnerability of infrastructure, including, but not limited to, roads, bridges, dams, and wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities, to impacts of climate change and recommend strategies to protect these assets;

(8) Work with relevant academic institutions and federal agencies to assess the threats of sea level rise, erosion and storm surge, and communicate these assessments and threats, along with potential tools to address them, to state agencies and affected communities;

(9) Develop plans, policies, and solutions based on the latest science to ensure the state continues to have a vibrant coastal economy, including protection of critical infrastructure;

(10) Develop a climate and health profile report that documents the range of Address
recommendations to reduce health impacts associated with climate change and identify, protect, and

(11) Encourages municipalities to incorporate climate change adaptation into local hazard mitigation plans and, when feasible, into hazard mitigation projects; and

(12) Take affirmative steps to eliminate and avoid duplication of effort through consistent coordination between agencies and programs, and pooling of resources, so as to make the most cost-efficient use of the state resources and provide the most effective services; and

(13) Foster public transparency by developing public metrics and an online public dashboard that will track both emissions reductions and sources of energy consumed by the state. Metrics and the dashboard will be updated at least annually.

42-6.2-7. Reporting.

No later than May 1, 2015, and annually thereafter, the council shall issue a report of its findings, recommendations, and progress on achieving the purposes and requirements of this chapter.

42-6.2-8. Powers and duties of state agencies -- Exercise of existing authority.

Consideration of Addressing the impacts of climate change shall be deemed to be within the powers and duties of all state departments, agencies, commissions, councils, and instrumentalities, including quasi-public agencies, and each shall be deemed to have and to exercise among its purposes in the exercise of its existing authority, the purposes set forth in this chapter pertaining to climate change mitigation, adaption, and resilience in so far as climate change affects its mission, duties, responsibilities, projects, or programs of the entity.

SECTION 2. Chapter 42-6.2 of the General Laws entitled "Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 - Climate Change Coordinating Council" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:


Mandatory targets for emissions reduction. It is hereby established that the state shall reduce its statewide greenhouse gas emissions to the targets set forth in § 42-6.2-2(a)(2)(i), as those targets may be from time to time revised, and that achieving these targets shall be mandatory under the provisions of this chapter. The targets at the time of the enactment of this act are that greenhouse gas emissions shall be ten percent (10%) below 1990 levels by 2020, shall be fifty percent (50%) below 1990 levels by 2035, and shall be net-zero emissions by 2050.

42-6.2-10. Enforcement.

(a) The provisions of this chapter may be enforced by means of an action in the superior court seeking either injunctive relief or a writ of mandamus or both.
(b) Venue for such actions shall be proper in the superior court of and for Providence county.

(c) All persons shall have standing to commence such enforcement actions.

(d) Reasonable attorneys’ fees shall be recoverable by all substantially prevailing plaintiffs who seek relief under this section.

42-6.2-11. Liberal construction.

This chapter, being necessary for the welfare of the state and its inhabitants, shall be liberally construed so as to effectuate its purposes.

42-6.2-12. Severability.

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section, or part of this chapter shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, that judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder of the chapter but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, section, or part directly involved in the controversy in which that judgment shall have been rendered.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
AN ACT
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - RESILIENT RHODE ISLAND
ACT OF 2014 - CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL

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1 This act would establish a statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction mandate.

2 This act would take effect upon passage.

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