



Stephanie De La Rosa, Commission Clerk

Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission

89 Jefferson Boulevard

Warwick, RI 02888

Email: [stephanie.delarosa@puc.ri.gov](mailto:stephanie.delarosa@puc.ri.gov)

**RE: Docket Nos. 25-54-EL (Electric) and 25-55-NG (Gas) - FY 2027 Infrastructure, Safety and Reliability (ISR) Plans**

**Public Comment**

*Re: The Importance of Continued Electric Infrastructure Investment for Rhode Island's Economy*

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Dear Chairman and Commissioners,

On behalf of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and the businesses we represent across Rhode Island, we respectfully submit these comments to emphasize the importance of continued investment in the reliability and modernization of our electric system.

For today's businesses—large and small alike—reliable electric service is not simply a convenience. It is a foundational requirement for operating in the modern economy. Payment systems, cloud-based business platforms, refrigeration, logistics systems, communications networks, and security systems all depend on uninterrupted electricity.

Gone are the days when a small business could simply open the doors and continue operating through a power outage with limited disruption. Today, when the power goes out, business activity often stops entirely. Transactions cannot be processed. Digital systems go offline. Refrigeration fails. Communications are interrupted. Public health and safety are placed at risk.

Every minute without electricity represents real economic loss. Similarly, for the many businesses that rely on and want natural gas service, the integrity of that system is also critical.

For this reason, the businesses we represent increasingly have very little tolerance for service interruptions, and they place a high value on system reliability and resilience. They expect the infrastructure that powers Rhode Island's economy to be robust, modern, and capable of supporting an increasingly digital and energy-dependent business environment.

We recognize and share the Commission's concern regarding affordability. Energy costs are a meaningful expense for many Rhode Island businesses, particularly small businesses. However, we respectfully urge the Commission not to sacrifice the reliability and resilience of the electric system in the pursuit of short-term cost containment.

Deferred or constrained investment in vital energy infrastructure ultimately leads to greater costs—both economic and operational. Outages disrupt commerce, damage equipment, spoil inventory, and erode consumer confidence. In the long run, failing to maintain and modernize the grid will cost Rhode Island's economy far more than prudent infrastructure investment.

Recent experience underscores this point. During the Blizzard of '26, Rhode Island's electric system performed exceptionally well despite challenging conditions. That performance did not happen by accident. It reflects years of ongoing investment in system hardening, maintenance, and operational capability. Continued progress requires that those investments remain a priority.

Rhode Island's economy depends on safe, reliable, hardened, and modernized energy infrastructure. As the Commission weighs the competing concerns before it, we respectfully urge you to continue prioritizing the investments necessary to maintain and strengthen the reliability of the electric system.

The businesses of Rhode Island depend on it.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie White

President

Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce