

2024 EMERGING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF RHODE ISLAND (ECRI)



The Environment Council of Rhode Island is a coalition of more than 60 Rhode Island organizations that advocate for policies to protect and enhance the environment. Our policy priorities would address some of Rhode Island's most pressing environmental issues. *Last updated: Feb 1st, 2024*

Emerging Top Priorities

Environmental Justice

- Rhode Island lacks a policy to address the siting and cumulative impacts from polluting industries disproportionately located in disadvantaged communities. We will support the establishment of such a policy this year. Additionally, we will support a Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) to limit the economic burden of utility bills on already overburdened communities.

Decarbonizing Buildings

- At present, Rhode Island lacks a comprehensive policy to address emissions from the building sector, which make up over a third of RI's greenhouse gas emissions. ECRI will support legislation to reduce emissions from existing buildings and new construction.

Funding RIPTA

- Transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in Rhode Island. The state budget must fund RIPTA to prevent the fiscal cliff and allow them to start implementing the Transit Master Plan and *expand* service in order to help reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Funding Environment & Climate Action

- ECRI urges the Governor, his Administration, and the General Assembly to leverage all federal funding available to address Rhode Island's various environmental needs and ensure Justice40 is met. We also look to the budget to fund more environmental staff and programs, especially for implementation of the Act on Climate, environmental justice, and land and water conservation.

Other Emerging Priorities

Public Education

- Rhode Islanders must understand the climate crisis and how to solve it. We must establish a consistent funding source for environmental education for both in-school and out-of-school

learning for youth as well as community awareness for all ages to help Rhode Islanders develop the skills and knowledge to be competitive in the growing green and blue economies.

Energy & Climate

- **Transportation Decarbonization:** ECRI will support bills requiring electric vehicle charging incentives, programs, and reforms, electrifying state and private fleets, and funding the Transit Master Plan and Bicycle Mobility Plan to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- **Renewable Energy:** ECRI will support legislation to encourage the development of responsibly sited renewable energy to comply with the 100% Renewable Energy Standard (RES).

Water, Toxics, & Waste

- **Composting:** ECRI will support composting policy to prevent burdens on our landfill, reduce methane production from food waste, and help fertilize our farms.
- **Reducing Plastic Waste:** ECRI expects to support multiple bills that would:
 - Create a deposit return system for beverage containers (aka the “bottle bill”).
 - Require sampling and testing plans for microplastics and ban intentionally-added microplastics.
 - Prohibit so-called chemical or thermal “recycling” of plastics.
- **Banning PFAS chemicals in consumer products:** ECRI will support legislation that would ban intentionally-added PFAS from a range of consumer products, including apparel, cookware, cosmetics, carpeting, menstrual products, and artificial turf.

Land & Forest

- Open spaces, agricultural lands, and forestland enhance the livability of our state, and ensure that we have clean air, clean water, places to recreate, and healthy local food systems. Conserved land plays an important role as a natural climate change solution, provides thousands of Rhode Islanders with jobs and contributes to the State’s economy. It is crucial to maintain these green spaces and not "pave paradise to put up a parking lot."

Just Transition for Labor and Workforce

- ECRI will collaborate with Climate Jobs Rhode Island and support efforts to secure available federal funds for Green and Blue Economy workforce training and for support and retraining of RI workers leaving today’s fossil fuel economy. We support apprenticeship programs and wage protection measures.

Resilience & Adaptation

- ECRI supports the creation or expansion of funding mechanisms for projects that help Rhode Island adapt and become more resilient to the effects of climate change. The RI Infrastructure Bank (RIIB), Municipal Resilience Program (MRP), and Stormwater Project Accelerator (SPA) are excellent examples and could be expanded to a larger scale.

For more information, please contact ECRI’s Co-VP’s of Policy:

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