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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2012

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE RISK  
REDUCTION ACT OF 2010

Introduced By: Representative Christopher R. Blazewski

Date Introduced: March 14, 2012

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 23-84-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 23-84 entitled "The Rhode  
2   Island Climate Risk Reduction Act of 2010" is hereby amended to read as follows:  
3           **23-84-3. Creation of The Rhode Island Climate Change Commission.** -- (a) There is  
4   hereby created an independent commission known as "The Rhode Island Climate Change  
5   Commission" consisting of twenty-eight (28) members as follows: three (3) of whom shall be  
6   members of the senate, to be appointed by the senate president, not more than two (2) from the  
7   same political party; three (3) of whom shall be members of the house of representatives, to be  
8   appointed by the speaker of the house not more than two (2) from the same political party; one of  
9   whom shall be the director of the department of environmental management, or his or her  
10   designee; one of whom shall be the executive director of the coastal resources management  
11   council, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the department of  
12   transportation, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the chair of the Rhode Island bays,  
13   rivers, and watersheds coordination team; one of whom shall be the director of the Rhode Island  
14   department of health, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the chief of staff of the water  
15   resources board, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the division of  
16   planning, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the state building commissioner, or his or  
17   her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the Rhode Island emergency management  
18   agency, or his or her designee; two (2) of whom shall represent municipal governments of coastal

1 municipalities one appointed by the senate president and one appointed by the speaker of the  
2 house; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of environmental non-profit organizations,  
3 appointed by the environment council of Rhode Island; two (2) of whom shall be representatives  
4 of business, one designated by the greater Providence chamber of commerce and one designated  
5 by the Rhode Island chamber of commerce coalition; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of  
6 higher education institutions, one appointed by the board of governors for higher education and  
7 one appointed by the association of independent colleges and universities of Rhode Island; one of  
8 whom shall be a representative of a utility distribution company having greater than one hundred  
9 thousand (100,000) customers to be appointed by the senate president; one of whom shall be the  
10 executive director of the Rhode Island realtors association, or his or her designee; one of whom  
11 shall be the executive director of the Rhode Island builders association, or his or her designee;  
12 one of whom shall be the executive director of the American institute of architects of Rhode  
13 Island, or his or her designee; and one of whom shall represent the medical profession, including,  
14 but not limited to, a doctor or nurse, to be appointed by the speaker of the house.

15 (b) The purposes of the commission shall be to study the projected impacts of climate  
16 change on Rhode Island, to identify and report methods of adapting to these climate change  
17 impacts in order to reduce likely harm and increase economic and ecosystem sustainability, and  
18 to identify potential mechanisms to mainstream climate adaptation into existing state and  
19 municipal programs including, but not limited to, policies plans, infrastructure development and  
20 maintenance.

21 (c) The commission shall support its purposes by undertaking the following duties  
22 including but not limited to:

23 (1) Recommending how to mainstream climate change, using a climate "lens", into  
24 existing state and local programs, policies and standards, and identify potential options to  
25 incorporate adaptation strategies.

26 (2) Compiling existing studies, research and programs relevant to climate change trends  
27 and potential impacts in Rhode Island and identifying gaps in the research available.

28 (3) Conducting a comprehensive overview of the risks Rhode Island may face as a result  
29 of rising air and water temperatures and sea level, increased storminess, and more intense  
30 droughts and rainfall events.

31 (4) Investigating the vulnerability of critical roads, bridges, protection infrastructure such  
32 as hurricane barriers, dams, and revetments, and public facilities such as hospitals, schools,  
33 sewage treatment plants, parks and beaches and other critical utilities to sea level rise, increased  
34 flooding and extended extreme summer heat.

1 (5) Exploring potential changes to floodplains and ways to notify homeowners, renters  
2 and commercial property owners of not only a property's flooding history but also its expected  
3 risk under projected levels of climate change and sea level rise.

4 (6) Assessing ecosystem impacts such as salt marshes, forests, and urban tree canopy and  
5 researching tree and plant species that will be most resilient to climate change expected in Rhode  
6 Island, as well as ways to secure additional funding to support the expansion of urban tree canopy  
7 to thirty percent (30%).

8 (7) Identifying potential ecosystem based adaptation options where conservation or  
9 restoration of natural ecosystems can provide key ecosystems services by minimizing risks and  
10 hazards from flooding and drought cycles.

11 (8) Identifying ways to increase Rhode Islanders' access to critical community health  
12 services that are expected to become more important as a result of projected climate impacts.

13 (9) Investigating potential impacts from non-point source pollution due to hydrological  
14 changes including stormwater runoff options for the Phase 2 Narragansett Bay Commission's  
15 Combined Sewer Overflow project, and implementing small-scale projects such as increasing the  
16 percentage of pervious surfaces in residential areas such as yards and gardens.

17 (10) Exploring possibilities to make funds or low interest loans available for  
18 governmental entities, non-profit entities and businesses to implement adaptation strategies,  
19 including green infrastructure projects on their properties, including green roofs, walls, and  
20 bioretention areas.

21 (11) Investigating possibilities to expand energy efficiency and weatherization programs  
22 as an adaptation option.

23 (12) Reviewing, among other things, existing local ordinances, provisions adopted by  
24 associations, deed restrictions, covenants, declarations or similar binding agreements, which  
25 prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting the installation of solar collectors, clotheslines,  
26 weatherization improvements, gardens or other energy devices based on renewable resources and  
27 proposing alternatives that would eliminate said prohibitions and authorize these types of uses as  
28 climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies for local implementation.

29 (13) Reviewing possibilities to amend regulations to allow street parking to reduce  
30 impervious surfaces in urban areas and runoff.

31 (14) Investigating how to support local agriculture including urban community gardens,  
32 and encouraging municipalities to foster neighborhood gardens in empty lots and parks.

33 (15) Developing a plan to expand access to cooling and relief centers by extending hours  
34 at libraries, community centers and opening pools to the public.

1           (16) Identifying examples and options for outreach and communication on climate  
2 change and adaptation options and recommending opportunities for coordinated outreach  
3 programs within Rhode Island.

4           (d) One senator and one representative appointed to the commission shall serve as co-  
5 chairs and shall call the first meeting of the commission. Vacancies shall be filled in like manner  
6 as the original appointment. The membership of the commission shall receive no compensation  
7 for their services. All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and  
8 information, documentary and otherwise, to the commission and its agents as is deemed  
9 necessary or desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this chapter. The joint  
10 committee on legislative services is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters  
11 for the commission.

12           (e) The commission shall provide a report of its findings and recommendations to the  
13 governor and the general assembly no later than March 1, ~~2011~~ [2012](#), and every March 1  
14 thereafter.

15           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - THE RHODE ISLAND CLIMATE RISK  
REDUCTION ACT OF 2010

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- 1           This act would change the date the commission would provide a report of its findings and
- 2   recommendations to the governor, from March 1, 2011 to March 1, 2012.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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