WHEREAS, Rhode Island and the world face significant environmental, economic, energy, and public health challenges from the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, Clean, affordable, and reliable electricity is essential for a thriving competitive business environment and for ensuring the State’s long-term economic health and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island law provides “that the state’s economy and the health and general welfare of the people of Rhode Island benefit when energy supplies are reliable and least-cost”; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island law established a first-in-the-nation goal to meet 100 percent of Rhode Island’s electricity demand with renewable energy by 2033; and

WHEREAS, The 2021 Act on Climate established Rhode Island as a national leader in reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions and requires a transition to cleaner sources of low and zero carbon power generation in order to achieve net-zero economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, Renewable energy generation is foundational to achieving 100 percent clean energy and is foundational to achieving a successful transition to Rhode Island’s clean energy future; and

WHEREAS, Many of the State’s renewable energy programs were established a decade ago and designed to jump-start the emerging clean energy industry. This industry is now mature;
and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island has some of the highest electric and gas rates in the country;

and

WHEREAS, It is essential that Rhode Island makes informed decisions designed to drive greenhouse gas reductions while ensuring that policy choices consider affordability and equity as we transition to a clean energy economy; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby is committed to a just and equitable clean energy transition which includes delivering renewable energy at lower cost to families and businesses; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Senate is hereby committed to strategic procurements of clean energy solutions that advance the State’s renewable generation and emission reduction goals while seeking the most cost-effective and efficient solutions for the State’s ratepayers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created consisting of eight (8) members: four (4) of whom shall be members of the Senate, one of whom shall be a member of the Senate Commission on Environment and Agriculture, one of whom shall be a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, one of whom shall be a member of the Senate Committee on Finance, and one of whom shall be the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, or designee; one of whom shall be the Administrator of the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers, or designee; one of whom shall be the Commissioner of the Office of Energy Resources, or designee; and one of whom shall be the President of Rhode Island Energy, or designee.

In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator.

The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study of Rhode Island’s renewable energy programs and the impacts to ratepayers including:

• Identifying the future needs for renewable energy in Rhode Island’s residential and commercial sectors, including, but not limited to, system sizes, energy production, and energy demand; and

• Providing recommendations to improve the cost-effectiveness and overall cost of the renewable programs while preserving the economic, environmental and health benefits that renewable energy provides to the State.
Forthwith by August 31, 2024, upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at the call of the President of the Senate and organize and shall select, from among the legislators, a chairperson. Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment. All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information, documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution. The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further RESOLVED, That the commission shall develop and submit its recommendations to the Senate, no later than February 14, 2025, and said commission shall expire on June 30, 2025.
This resolution would create an eight (8) member special legislative study commission whose purpose it would be to study renewable energy programs, and who would report back to the Senate by February 14, 2025, and would expire on June 30, 2025.