



Advancing the Clean Energy Future

22 Parsonage Street • Box 155
Providence, RI 02903
401.276.0600 • acadiacenter.org

March 27, 2024

Senate Environment and Agriculture
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Acadia Center Support of S2535 Environmental Justice Act

Dear Chairperson DiMario and members of the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee:

Acadia Center appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2535, the Environmental Justice Act. Acadia Center is a non-profit research and advocacy organization committed to advancing the clean energy future. Our organization seeks to place and keep environmental justice solutions at the forefront of state and regional climate and clean energy initiatives through procedural and distributive equity.

Our approach to procedural equity advocates for diverse and compensated stakeholder participation, increasing representation on influential climate and energy boards and governance, and supporting partnerships with lower-income urban and rural communities and communities of color in the co-designing process of state and regional climate and energy plans and policies. To this end, we encourage the sponsors of the Environmental Justice Act and members of the committee to build bridges and engage in constructive dialogue with the environmental justice groups developing the alternative Green Justice Zone Act. While the Green Justice Zone Act has distinct differences, there are also points of alignment and certain areas of language in S2535 which may acknowledge and include the efforts and work put into the Green Justice Zone Act.

Across programs, Acadia Center works to ensure the benefits and burdens of climate and clean energy policy, programs, and initiatives are equitably distributed among communities while contextualizing ongoing energy burdens. Senate Bill 2535 provides a critical framework for distributive equity by defining environmental justice focus areas based on household income, minority population and English language proficiency. Further, defining cumulative impacts in statute will help to mitigate disproportionate environmental burdens in these environmental justice focus areas and across the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this important environmental justice bill.

Sincerely,

Emily Koo
Senior Policy Advocate and Rhode Island Program Director
ekoo@acadiacenter.org