

February 26, 2026

Representative Ronald Mariano, Speaker
House of Representatives
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways & Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Speaker Mariano and Chair Michlewitz,

On behalf of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and our 1,200 members, I write to offer comments on H.5151, *An Act relative to energy affordability, clean power and economic competitiveness*. We thank the House of Representatives for rightly focusing on the difficult policy choices around energy affordability in the Commonwealth and the impacts on residents and businesses. As you are aware, the Commonwealth is home to some of the highest energy rates in the United States. Addressing affordability for ratepayers is important to attract and retain people and employers here as we strive to grow our economy.

Energy costs are on the minds of employers, as energy bills have increased dramatically in recent years. There is no one reason for these increases, with infrastructure upkeep, supply constraints, seasonal rate spikes, and public policy choices all contributing to the consumer's bill at the end of each month. State regulators only control portions of our energy costs, with certain supply and interstate transmission costs regulated through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, ISO-New England and other federal government partners. That said, the Commonwealth has policy tools available to mitigate energy bills.

The Chamber supports the Commonwealth's long-term goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. We count among our membership clean energy developers and technology companies that will contribute to climate solutions, members that will build the infrastructure and buildings of the future to become more efficient, and the energy electric and gas distribution companies that keep the lights on during and after the transition to cleaner forms of energy – a necessity to the everyday economy. However, we must also grapple with the practical realities of costs, development timelines, and unforeseen federal barriers that placed Massachusetts in different circumstances today.

As the House engages in an important debate about energy affordability, the Chamber offers the following comments on H.5151 and selected amendments for your consideration.

Support for H.5151

The Commonwealth's transition to cleaner energy sources and a modern, dynamic energy grid will span the next few decades. Unfortunately, the clean energy industry has been hit with short-term setbacks, losing a reliable federal partner and resulting in significant delays for offshore wind and other renewable resources. The House has been a champion of the wind energy industry, but it will take many years to reset the offshore wind industry back on track, a crucial source of energy for the future, and one of the few that can provide an abundant clean resource here in Massachusetts. These developments raise difficult policy questions in the short-term.

H.4744, released by the Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy Committee, began a critical conversation about the Commonwealth's 2030 emissions reduction requirements and other energy policy mandates in these circumstances, and the need for reliable, affordability energy in the years to come. While perhaps a topic for a future legislative session, we should note that without the deployment of offshore wind (and other clean energy resources), it is fair to question whether the 2030 reduction goal is achievable.

We appreciate that the House addresses some of this short-term reality and deploys policy tools to balance affordability in light of high bills and new circumstances as part of H.5151, including:

- refunding a substantial portion of Alternative Compliance Payments to ratepayers on a temporary basis;
- moderating short-term Mass Save spending;
- embracing “virtual power plants” as a demand management resource;
- providing more transparency around energy ratepayer bills; and
- extending the term of clean energy contracts from 20 years to 30 years.

However, H.5151 alone will not drastically curb energy costs over the long-term – and in some instances makes energy procurements more complicated and expensive with unnecessary requirements. While setting the stage for greater attention to energy affordability, a sustained, years long focus on the cost of energy to residents and businesses is necessary to ensure energy procurements, clean energy programs, and energy efficiency measures benefit ratepayers and maximize efficiency. Additional policy mandates should be avoided as the Commonwealth develops the programs and resources authorized by previous statutes and H.5151.

Amendments

Support: Amendment 34 (Representative Daniel Cahill)

Massachusetts and the New England region will continue to need existing and new energy resources for the foreseeable future. As the Commonwealth moves towards cleaner resources, oftentimes requiring electrification, natural gas will continue to play an important role in the energy mix to provide a stable and plentiful source of energy while new resources, such as the New England Clean Energy Connect and Vineyard Wind I, and others are deployed. The Commonwealth’s limited and constrained natural gas pipeline capacity must continue to be part of the evaluation of our energy resources and their costs as the Commonwealth continues to turn to dirtier, more costly generating resources - particularly during cold winter months.

Our electric grid is heavily tied to natural gas prices, and the baseload natural gas fueled electric generating resources that keep the lights on. In the winter months, the Commonwealth rightfully prioritizes heating customers for access to natural gas, straining gas demand, distribution capacity, and exposing electricity generators to higher prices. These winter price spikes drive higher energy costs for everyone, and often result in the burning of dirtier, more expensive fuels like oil. Despite the electric grid’s dependency on natural gas, electric ratepayers do not currently contribute to the energy supply infrastructure necessary to relieve constrained transmission and distribution lines.

Amendment 34 allows electric distribution companies to procure sources of energy generation or energy transportation services that meet rigid requirements, including that such projects 1) are cost-effective, 2) enhance electricity reliability, 3) mitigate winter price spikes, 4) provide energy price suppression, 5) and benefit environmental justice and low-income populations, among other requirements. While available to natural gas, any resources that meet these requirements may be utilized to mitigate price volatility and are subject to the review and adjudicatory process before the Department of Public Utilities – ensuring a public process before approval.

The worst-case scenario for the economy is an unreliable electric grid, where brownouts or blackouts occur and shutdown trade and commerce and price instability leads to bill shocks for businesses and residents. This amendment promotes energy security and price stability, and we urge the House to adopt the amendment.

Support Amendment 10 (Representative Manny Cruz)

The Chamber supports the development and deployment of offshore wind clean energy generating resources. Given federal approval delays outside of the control of the Commonwealth, the Chamber supports amendment 10 that extends the necessary local and state permits and approvals for large clean energy facilities for 4 years. This amendment will ensure that projects can proceed quickly under a new regulatory environment and avoid duplicative approval burdens that will further slow essential energy projects. We urge the House to adopt this amendment.

Support Amendment 19 (Representative Ken Gordon)

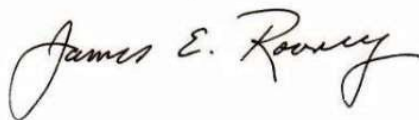
Similarly, the Chamber supports the ability of offshore wind developers that previously offered bids pursuant to a Massachusetts clean energy solicitation to adjust pricing related circumstances beyond their control – subject to public comment and the review and approval of state regulators. Given the significant delays created by the federal government in the review and permitting of offshore wind facilities, the price structures of suppliers, worker pay, and materials impacted by tariffs will place these projects in entirely new financial circumstances when they may progress again. To avoid the abandonment of another offshore wind contracting process, this amendment offers an alternative that allows previously selected projects to offer price adjustments reflecting new realities in an expedited timeframe – allowing for a timely process to restart offshore wind deployment, while also ensuring the Department can thoroughly review the basis for any cost adjustments and reject those that may not benefit ratepayers. The Chamber supports amendment 19.

Support Amendment 78 (Representative Brad Jones)

Amendment 78 would delay the Department of Environmental Protection's regulation of vehicle emission standards for 5 years. In particular, the shortage of available zero-emission heavy and medium duty trucks, and ongoing disputes on the federal level on the ability to regulate in this area, this is a commonsense amendment to allow for a short-term delay.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



James E. Rooney
President and CEO