June 22, 2021

TO: K. Joseph Shekarchi
        Speaker of the House &
        House Representatives

From: Joseph L. Warner Jr.
        Building/Zoning Official & Floodplain Manager
        Town of Charlestown, RI

RE: Bill #2021 – H6446
        Viewpoint: Amend

Please accept this testimony to amend H6446 as necessary. I fully support the requirement for all municipalities within the State of RI to implement "electronic construction permitting". However, it is imperative that municipalities be permitted to utilize a software system that suits their particular needs of the community.

Here in the Town of Charlestown we have spent countless hours interviewing software companies to find an online system that can handle all our specific needs, as the current software utilized by the State "Viewpoint Cloud" is not sufficient. The company we have recently vetted, "Municity", is affiliated with the International Code Council (ICC), the code adopted by the State. This affiliation has resulted in a software that is not only completely customizable for the specific needs of a coastal community but has been created with the assistance of code professionals, not just computer programmers. The Charlestown Building Department has just recently achieved a Class 6 rating in the CRS (Community Rating System) Program, the first in FEMA Region 1 (New England). The CRS is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). This designation will result in our residents receiving a 20% discount on flood insurance. It is of utmost importance that the software we utilize will accommodate the many requirements of this program to include historic data conversion, reporting, data management, customized forms, and overall simplicity of use, not inclusive. A compatible software is an absolute necessity to maintain an efficient operation and prevent any oversights that could jeopardize this discount.

Some additional points I would like to present:
- The current system utilized by the State "Viewpoint" is overpriced and more costly than "Municity".
- Utilizing Viewpoint requires municipalities to maintain and fund their old software to access important historic data.
- Utilizing one software company for the entire State will create a monopoly; two or more software companies permitted within the State will allow for competition.
- Numerous Building Officials within the State are very disappointed with Viewpoint Cloud. This proposed mandate should be discussed with all those working the front line. One size does not fit all.
- Support and training from Viewpoint is limited at best.
- I fully support online permitting and support having a link on the State's e-permitting portal to create a standardized permit location; however, municipalities should be able to choose a software that fits their needs and is compatible with other working systems within the municipality.

I thank you for your time and consideration.