



Rhode Island Marine Trades Association
513 Broadway
Suite 320
Newport, RI 02840
(401) 396-9619
www.rimta.org

February 27, 2025

Representative David Bennett
Chair, House Environmental and Natural Resources Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02902

RE: H5341. Concern regarding the act that authorizes the collection of a small additional fee, in addition to the registration fee paid by motorboat owners.

Dear Chair Bennett and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA), I am writing to express our concerns regarding House Bill 5431, which seeks to authorize an additional fee on motorboat registrations to support the newly established Freshwater Lake Management Program. While we recognize and appreciate the intent behind this initiative to enhance the management of Rhode Island's freshwater resources, we urge the committee to reconsider the bill in its current form due to conflicts with federal law and potential implications for Rhode Island's access to federal funding for boating safety programs.

House Bill 5431 proposes an additional fee beyond the standard vessel registration fee, which raises concerns regarding compliance with federal law under 46 USC 13103(c). This statute explicitly prohibits states from imposing additional fees alongside vessel registration fees if they wish to remain eligible for federal funding from the U.S. Coast Guard for boating safety programs. If Rhode Island enacts this measure as currently structured, the state could risk losing access to these critical federal funds, which play a vital role in ensuring safe boating practices, law enforcement efforts, and public education initiatives across our waterways.

To avoid unintended financial consequences, we respectfully recommend that the committee conduct further study to explore alternative funding mechanisms that do not jeopardize federal support. We look forward to continued dialogue on how best to support Rhode Island's natural resources while preserving essential funding for boating safety.

Sincerely,

Brian Dursi
Executive Director
RI Marine Trades Association
401-396-9619