

January 22, 2026

Representative David A. Bennett  
Chair, House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02908

**Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports H 7071 on Invasive Plant Management Act**

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have chapters in all fifty U.S. states and in nearly 80 countries around the globe. Here in Rhode Island, we steward more than 11,000 acres of protected land, and conserve additional acreage with conservation partners including local land trusts and RIDEM.

As one of the state's largest land trusts, we recognize the importance of not only protecting critical habitat but managing it to the highest standards. This includes ensuring native species can thrive to promote habitat for wildlife and healthy forests.

Currently, The Nature Conservancy spends around \$30,000 annually on invasive management to tackle the most aggressive species, including Autumn Olive, Tree of Heaven, Black Swallowwort and Mile-A-Minute Weed. We estimate that if we had the capital to do so, we could spend up to ten times that amount just for invasive removal. These plants, if left unmitigated, smother and displace native plants systems and disrupt the ecosystem balance that our healthy forests rely on.

We also know that climate change is exacerbating an already difficult problem. Warming temperatures, increased storm frequency and intensity, and even forest fires all impact native species and habitat, and benefit invasive species that are opportunistic in their spread.

House Bill 7071 ensures that Rhode Island is not actively making this issue worse. By prohibiting these plants from getting into the ground in the first place, we are setting ourselves up to better manage our forests and ensure sustainable and healthy forests.

The Nature Conservancy supports this bill and thanks you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,



Angela Tuoni  
Director of Climate & Government Relations  
The Nature Conservancy - Rhode Island Chapter