

FROM: George Voutes, 17 Shore Road, Bristol RI, 02809

RE: Support for H7071 [The RI Invasives Plant Management Bill of 2026]

DATE: January 20, 2026

Chair Bennett and honorable members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for H7071, which would prohibit the importation, transportation, disbursement, distribution, sale, or purchase of any species of non-native (exotic) invasive plants in RI.

The amount of devastation to RI trees and land from invasive plants is alarming and needs to be reversed urgently. I live next to the East Bay bike and can attest first hand to the incalculable damage invasives are having on our trees. The image below is that of **Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) vines** strangling and killing what looks to be tree on the bike path in Barrington. This is not an isolated instance, but rather an all-too-common sight everywhere in RI (with the exception of remaining intact forest land that hasn't been clearcut or developed) . It's not a crazy assumption that the fate of all trees in RI is doomed unless we take immediate action to stop the entrance of these invasive vines (including English Ivy, and others) into our state. We also need to reallocate State DEM and Municipal DPW resources to remediate existing vines that are destroying trees on public land. I have cut back nearly one mile of these invasives along the bike path, and know it's not an impossible task to get a handle on these bad vines. It just takes leadership, sustained commitment, and elbow grease to get a handle on this problem.



Rhode Island is one of only five states without a prohibited plant sale list, a list that restricts the sale and distribution of invasive plants, and the only state in New England without one. This is unacceptable to residents of RI and to the natural world we need and rely on for a health society. Invasive plants are a specific category of non-native plant that have been shown to wreak havoc on local ecosystems by spreading exponentially and crowding out native plant species.

This bill would prohibit the sale of these plant species at nurseries, garden centers and anywhere plants are sold in the state. We should also ensure the bill educates RI residents on the dangers of invasive plants and native options to consider.

Please pass this bill out of committee and to the House floor with a recommendation for passage.

Sincerely,

George Voutes

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