

To: David Bennett, Chair, and honorable members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
From: Jane Donnelly, Barrington, RI
Date: 01/21/26
Re: In support of House Bill 7071

I am writing in support of House Bill 7071, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Boylan and others, which would prohibit the importation, transportation, disbursement, sale or purchase of any terrestrial species of non-native plants deemed invasive by the Department of Environmental Management.

Invasive non-native species, most of which have been introduced by intentional sale and planting, can spread through seed disbursement and other means to unintended locations where they outcompete with native plants. In turn, the loss of native plants negatively affects biodiversity, wildlife habitats, and the resilience of the ecosystem. Invasive plants are difficult to remove and their negative impacts on the ecosystem increase with time. I have lived and gardened in Rhode Island since 1972 and have seen, first-hand, the negative impact of invasive plants on our environment.

Rhode Island is one of only five states in the union and the *only* state in New England that does not prohibit the sale of invasive plants. It's embarrassing that our beautiful state is so far behind the curve on this initiative. Invasive plants present risks to agriculture, natural ecosystems, and Rhode Island's economic productivity.

I think the likely opponents of HB7071 will be Rhode Island nurseries, but I know many thoughtful gardeners who leave Rhode Island to buy plants in Massachusetts and Connecticut because they want to support businesses that align with their philosophy. Rhode Island nursery owners can look to businesses in the other New England states to learn how to make the shift to selling native plants. They may be surprised to find their customers excited to buy beautiful plants adaptable to the suburban landscape.

I urge you to vote favorably on HB7071.

Copy to Jennifer Boylan