

Lou Mansolillo

From: Kenda Swartz <kendaswartz@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2026 10:42 PM
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Cc: Rep. Speakman, June
Subject: Support for Bill H7071

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FROM: Kenda Swartz

RE: Support for H7071

DATE: January 17. 2026

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

My name is Kenda Swartz and I live in Bristol.

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

This bill matters to me because I've seen the damage invasive plants cause up close. I've spent a lot of time (sometimes an hour or more, daily, during the summer into early fall) along the east bay bike path trying to release native species like joe pye weed, goldenrod, and New England asters from the grip of invasive plants so they have a chance to survive and feed our dwindling beneficial insect populations. I've also seen oriental bittersweet suffocating the grandest of trees and phragmites as far as the eye can see, propagating *uninhibited* as if they owned the land long before the true inhabitants like cattails, milkweeds, and bulrushes.

It's frustrating to see how quickly these invasive species spread and how hard it is to undo the damage once they're established. Volunteers and conservation groups are doing their best, but it often feels like we're scrambling just to stay on top of a problem that feels insurmountable. Preventing invasive plants from being sold or distributed in the first place would make a real difference and save time, money, and effort down the road. More importantly, it'll protect the many species who depend on the native plants.

H7071 is a practical, preventative step to protecting Rhode Island's natural areas and the native plants that make them thrive. I hope you will support this bill and help address the problem before it becomes even harder to manage. More importantly, passing this legislation would show that Rhode Island's leaders understand the bigger picture: tackling the root cause of a problem makes meaningful, lasting solutions possible.

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. 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. With neighboring states already taking action to restrict invasive plant sales, aligning Rhode Island's policies would help ensure we are part of a

regional solution.

This bill would prohibit the sale of these plant species at nurseries, garden centers and anywhere plants are sold in the state.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenda Swartz
Bristol