

FROM: Nika Ficano, Providence, RI

1/21/2026

RE: Support for H7071

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

My name is Nika Ficano and I live in Providence, RI and work in conservation and garden care throughout the state. I am writing to urge you to support H7071 (Boylan), which would prohibit the import, transportation, distribution, sale, or purchase of select plants that have been identified as invasive and harmful to the ecosystem by the RI Department of Environmental Management. A similar policy already exists in RI for invasive aquatic plants, and there is legislation that prohibits the sale of terrestrial invasive plants in every other New England state, so it should not be controversial for RI to pass H7071. Failing to pass this legislation will allow invasive plants to continue to spread and monopolize tracts of RI and the broader region, weakening conservation efforts throughout New England.¹

As someone who works in conservation and gardening in RI, large portions of my time and resources go towards controlling invasive plants. I have become accustomed to seeing invasive plants everywhere throughout the state and I am frequently overwhelmed by dense stands of Privet, Invasive Honeysuckle, Burning Bush, Multiflora Rose, and Mugwort, to name just a few, on individuals' properties and in our protected natural spaces alike. Before I can begin to establish a diverse mix of plants that support our pollinators, wildlife, soil, and air and water quality, I have to spend significant time removing these species, which is economically expensive and environmentally disruptive but important. When left unmanaged, invasive plants often become large monocultures that decrease the biodiversity and overall health of our natural spaces by outcompeting ecotypic plants that have coevolved with each other and our wildlife.² As horticulture is the primary avenue by which non-native ornamental plants are introduced to the US^{3,4} and given the conditions to become invasive,⁵ cutting off this supply through the prohibited sale of certain problematic species is a crucial part of the multifaceted management of these populations.

As a final thought, though purely anecdotal, I have noticed greater invasive plant pressure working in RI than in MA and NY, both of which already have prohibited plant lists. As plants do not acknowledge state boundaries when they spread, consistency across state lines is important in invasive plant management specifically and in conservation more generally.¹ While many factors contribute to the variable density of invasive plant populations across a region, the ongoing introduction of problematic species to gardens and landscaping across RI is one crucial factor that we have the opportunity to confront now^{3,4}. Eliminating the input of new invasive plant material into our state will decrease the resources needed to maintain properties and natural spaces across the state,⁶ will encourage nurseries, garden centers, and landscapers to invest in native plant stock, will contribute to the health and biodiversity of our ecosystems², and will help RI join the rest of New England when it comes to conservation. For these reasons, please pass H7071 out of committee and to the House floor with a recommendation for passage. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Nika Ficano, Providence, RI

References

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- ² Weidlich EWA, Flórido FG, Sorrini TB, Brancalion PHS. Controlling invasive plant species in ecological restoration: A global review. *J Appl Ecol*. 2020; 57: 1806–1817. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13656>
- ³ Lehan NE, Murphy JR, Thorburn LP, Bradley, BA. Accidental Introductions are an important source of invasive plants in the continental United States. *American Journal of Botany*. 2013; 100(7): 1287-1293. doi:10.3732/ajb.1300061
- ⁴ Hulme PE, Brundu G, Carboni M, et al. Integrating invasive species policies across ornamental horticulture supply chains to prevent plant invasions. *J Appl Ecol*. 2018; 55: 92–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.12953>
- ⁵ Rojas-Sandoval, J., Acevedo-Rodríguez, P. Naturalization and invasion of alien plants in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. *Biol Invasions* **17**, 149–163 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10530-014-0712-3>
- ⁶ Keller RP, Lodge DM, Finnoff DC. Risk assessment for invasive species produces net bioeconomic benefits. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2007 Jan 2;104(1):203-7. doi: 10.1073/pnas.0605787104. Epub 2006 Dec 26. PMID: 17190819; PMCID: PMC1765435.