



RHODE ISLAND

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

January 22, 2026

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7071 An Act Relating to Agriculture and Forestry – Protection of Trees and Plants Generally – Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7071, which would put in place new prohibitions regarding non-native invasive plant species. DEM shares the sponsor's concern regarding the proliferation of invasive plants in Rhode Island's environment as both terrestrial and aquatic invasive plants pose a threat to the state's native plants and biodiversity. However, we are concerned that we will have difficulty implementing the legislation's provisions with existing resources.

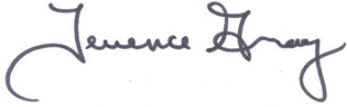
H 7071 would prohibit any person from importing, transporting, dispersing, introducing, selling, or purchasing of any species of non-native (exotic) invasive plants. DEM would be directed to promulgate regulations defining which plant species are covered by the law and enforcing its provisions. Violations of the law's provisions would be punishable by a fine of not more than \$500.

DEM's concern with this legislation is a lack of resources to enforce the provisions it would introduce. It is our understanding that the Rhode Island Natural History Survey has developed a list of invasive plants which DEM could use as the foundation for the regulations that the legislation would require. Of greater concern is that enforcement of the prohibitions in the legislation would likely require that DEM inspect nurseries and retailers to ensure compliance. This responsibility to do so would fall on a small number of staff who are already stretched thin with existing responsibilities.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of

Legislative Affairs, at ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Terrence Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Terrence" being more prominent than the last name "Gray".

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director