

Testimony in support of H7074: Construction and Maintenance of State Roads

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: January 22, 2026

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

We are rapidly losing many species of pollinators to extinction, often because of loss of habitat and supportive vegetation.

Pollinators are essential to the reproduction of many plants. Without pollinators, we would not have food!

H7074 makes a significant contribution by using areas within limits of the 70 DOT-maintained roads and highways—overall a substantial surface area—for growing native and pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, and plants. In addition to beautification, this will create new habitat for pollinators, helping them to survive, which ultimately helps securing our food supply.

The text of the bill “authorizes” and “empowers”, which does not necessarily create an obligation for the DOT to plant pollinator-friendly plants. Ideally, there should be language to state that the intent of the bill is to maximize native and pollinator-friendly plantings.

Looking at last years testimonies, 18 written testimonies were in support of the bill.

The 19th testimony, submitted by the Director of the RI DOT, while not opposing the bill in principle, raised the concern that “The use of the language “shall” in the bill, ..., requires RI DOT to build this associated cost into the project.... . The Department would prefer the language to reflect our position to have the option, or choice to implement pollinator plantings, when advisable and appropriate.” In light of this position, I strongly recommend to add a requirement that the DOT reports annually the surface area and locations that were planted with native and pollinator-friendly plants, to create transparency and to demonstrate the extent by which the RI DOT actually does plant pollinator-friendly plants.

The bill was held for further study and not voted on in 2023, 2024, and 2025. I sincerely hope that the committee’s thorough studying over three years finally lead to the realization that this bill is straightforward, and not only benefits pollinators, but also contributes to secure our food supply.

I urge you to not lose more time and to bring the bill to a vote in 2026.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative McGaw for re-introducing this important bill.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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