

To: Chairman Bennett and House Environment and Natural Resources Committee

From: Ed Moura, Barrington, RI

Re: House Bill H7074

Date: January 21, 2026

I am writing to express strong support for H7074, which authorizes and empowers the RI DOT to plant trees, shrubs, and otherwise beautify areas within the limits of roads and highways, with an emphasis on pollinator-friendly native species where appropriate.

Why is this important? Bird, bee, butterfly and beneficial insect populations (pollinators) are in rapid decline due to loss of habitat and the vegetation they need to survive. Much land has been cleared for housing development and urban sprawl over the past several decades, and as the saying goes “they aren’t making any more land” ! As many of the developed areas are then planted with non-native plants which are virtually useless for these species to survive, the result has been the creation of ecological dead zones. To help reverse this trend, H7074 could make a significant amount of land area available which is currently underutilized to help restore habitat and ensure the survival of these much needed plant and animal species. This is not an option, if the pollinators continue to decline and/or go extinct, we are doomed as well, as they play a key role in our food production.

Why the emphasis on native plants? These plants have evolved over millions of years in our area and have developed symbiotic relationships with the many pollinators, often acting as host plants--the only plants that some pollinators can reproduce on. Deep rooted native plants help to mitigate flooding caused by stormwater run-off from hard surfaces. Native plants do not require any toxic chemical inputs to survive and thrive. Native plants will not need regular or constant mowing/trimming, saving labor/machinery dollars in the long run and helping to reduce air pollution as well. Trees provide shade and help reduce heat islands. The benefits are too numerous to list here, and are easily attainable with a forward looking and concerted effort, which would be a win-win-win for all of us.

Lastly, this bill has been presented and held for further study the past few years. Unfortunately, time is running short to help reverse the negative ecological impact of the recent past, so NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT !! I urge you to not let more time pass and bring this bill to a vote in 2026.

Thank you for your consideration

Respectfully,

Ed

