

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

George Voutes, 17 Shore Road, Bristol RI, 02809

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

Too many species of pollinators are facing eminent extinction. This is mainly due to loss of habitat and the use of toxic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Pollinators are absolutely critical to the reproduction of most plants and food we eat. Without pollinators, we would not have sufficient food. This about this for a moment. This is urgent!

H7074 is a very good bill and greatly helps Pollinators survive by using areas within DOT maintained roads and highways to grow native and pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, and plants. This bill will create significant new habitat for pollinators, helping them survive, which ultimately helps secure our food supply. The beautification of our roadways will also be a nice by-product of this effort.

The language of this bill should be strengthened to mandate that DOT maximize the planting of native and pollinator-friendly plantings, and remove any reference that give DOT the “option” to plant native and pollinator-friendly plantings.

I also strongly recommend adding the requirement in the bill that the DOT reports annually the surface area and locations that were planted with native and pollinator-friendly plants. This will help create transparency across the government to demonstrate the extent by which the RI DOT actually does plant pollinator-friendly plantings.

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. Many states have already enacted legislation to plant pollinator friendly plantings along roadways including, MA/CT/VT/NY/NJ/PA/IL/CA/MD/MO/NM/NC and OH. I urge you not to lose more time and to bring the bill to a full vote in 2026.

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

*George Voutes*

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