

March 25, 2026

The Honorable David A. Bennett, Chair  
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 7991 – AN ACT RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- COASTAL RESILIENCE -- NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR EROSION CONTROL, WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND EXPEDITED PERMITTING

Chair Bennett and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I write to express our support for House Bill 7991, which would direct the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), in consultation with the Chief Resilience Officer, to update regulations to prioritize nature-based solutions for coastal resilience projects and establish an expedited permitting process coordinated by DEM.

Municipalities across Rhode Island are on the front lines of climate change impacts, particularly in coastal communities where flooding, erosion, and storm surge present ongoing and increasing challenges. The League appreciates the intent of this legislation to promote innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective approaches to resilience through nature-based solutions. These strategies not only enhance environmental protection, but can also provide long-term benefits to infrastructure, public safety, and local economies.

Importantly, this proposal reflects the productive collaboration that emerged from Representative Cortvriend's Legislative Study Commission on Climate Change Impacts and Solutions. It serves as a clear example of how thoughtful fact-finding, stakeholder engagement, and the input of subject matter experts can lead to meaningful policy development. The League is encouraged to see these efforts translated into actionable legislation.

We recognize the value of a coordinated and expedited permitting process, which can help municipalities advance critical resilience projects more efficiently while maintaining appropriate environmental standards. Streamlining these processes, when done thoughtfully, can reduce administrative burdens and support timely project implementation at the local level.

The League stands ready to assist in any way to help foster innovative ideas and support the successful implementation of this initiative on behalf of all 39 cities and towns. We look forward to continued collaboration with state partners to support Rhode Island's resilience and preparedness efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Randy R. Rossi  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Environment and Natural Resources Committee