



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

March 31, 2026

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

RE: H 7619 An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife - Licensing

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7619, which was introduced at DEM's request and would allow members of any federally-recognized Indian tribe located in Rhode Island to obtain freshwater and saltwater recreational fishing licenses without a fee. DEM supports this legislation.

In recent years, DEM has worked to strengthen our relationship with the Narragansett Indian Tribe through regular meetings and closer collaboration on issues of common concern. Through this process, we learned that many members of the Narragansett Tribe rely heavily on subsistence fishing to meet their dietary needs. We also learned that the fee associated with obtaining a state fishing license pose a financial burden to tribal members. While tribal members are not required to obtain state licenses to fish on tribal settlement lands, they are required to do so when fishing in other parts of the state.

H 7619 would eliminate the fee to obtain a freshwater or saltwater recreational fishing license for members of the Narragansett tribe to ease the financial burden associated with obtaining licenses. Current law already provides similar fee exemptions for designated classes. For example, residents over the age of 65 are entitled to receive a license without paying a fee. This proposal would not change the requirement that tribal members obtain a license and adhere to state fishing laws and regulations when fishing in areas not located on tribal settlement lands. It also does not make any changes to the state's commercial fishing licensing laws.

In addition to the provisions already discussed, the bill also includes a technical correction to a drafting error in a section of law requiring the licensure of individuals and entities involved with

dealing marine species. This correction will ensure that DEM can enforce this law consistent with its intent.

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 Jason McNamee, DEM Deputy Director for Natural Resources, at jason.mcnamee@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

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