

**February 27, 2024 Testimony of Max Bliss & Katelyn Pisano, Co-Presidents Warren Land Trust in Support of House Bill 7550**

Chairman Abney,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **House Bill 7550** to add funding for the FY 2025 Green Economy Bond. As Co-Presidents of the Warren Land Trust, preserving and protecting forests, farmlands, and other open spaces is at the core of our mission. These lands provide important outdoor recreational opportunities, include ecologically valuable habitats, and are critical for the continued success of local food systems. They are essential for climate change mitigation in local communities and play a vital role in the State's economy by bringing high quality jobs and revenue streams to the State, while contributing immense intangible benefits to the people of Rhode Island. Natural places are at the heart of the human experience, and preserving these places strengthens our communities, our citizens, and our homes. As a local land trust, we know the importance of matching funds to our efforts to protect the forests, farmlands, and open spaces that are woven into the fabric of our identity.

In particular, we are asking for:

- \$5 Million for the Agriculture Land Preservation Committee for the Farmland Protection Program, which is critical to preserving the State's farmlands and supporting the State's farmers. Local farms in Warren contribute essential fresh produce to our residents.
- \$5 Million for the State Open Space Program, which is important in protecting the State's ecologically valuable land and areas of interest and significance.
- \$3 Million for the Local Open Space Grant Program, which provides matching funds to municipalities, land trusts, and nonprofits working to preserve open spaces within communities. The Warren Land Trust has worked to preserve, rehabilitate, and improve natural spaces within Warren. We have implemented climate change mitigation measures, wildlife habitat enhancements, and public access points and trails, all of which provide distinct tangible and intangible benefits to the Town and its people.
- \$3 Million for Forest and Habitat Management on state lands, which protects and enhances important wildlife habitats and outdoor recreational spaces across the State.

Therefore, we urge the committee to include *\$16 Million in additional funding* for the FY 2025 Green Economy Bond. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about this important issue.

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