

Chris O'Brien

From: Frances Topping <fmtopping@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 11:46 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Green Bond

Dear Chairman Marvin Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Over the last 50 years, rural communities have grown at much faster rates than the state as a whole. Much of the state's forests and farmland have already been developed. As land in Rhode Island is perceived as a bargain to out-of-state buyers, it is still being developed at a fast pace. We don't have much time left to protect Rhode Island's most important forest and farmland and to create open space corridors to allow some of our wildlife to adapt to climate change.

I fully support this bill that would add \$16 Million to the Green Bond to ensure that there is funding to conserve important forests, farmlands, and open spaces across Rhode Island. When this money is matched with municipal, private, and federal funding sources it will make a real difference to preserve what makes Rhode Island such a wonderful place to live and visit.

I support:

- \$5 Million for the farmland preservation program that is critical to preserving some of the last important farms in the state.
- \$5 Million for the State Open Space Program to acquire and conserve lands of statewide interest and significance, including ecologically valuable land that enhances state management areas, parks, and important forest lands.
- \$3 Million in Local Open Space Matching Grants to municipalities, land trusts, and non-profit conservation land organizations to preserve valuable open space in local communities across RI.
- \$3 Million in funding for forest health and habitat management on State lands, so RIDEM can work to improve wildlife habitat and connectivity, increase forest fire prevention strategies, remove dead and hazard trees, and write and implement forest stewardship plans in state management areas.

For all these reasons, I urge the committee to include \$16 Million in additional funding for the FY 2025 Green Economy Bond.

Thank you,

Frances Topping]

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