

March 12, 2025

Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, Rhode Island House Finance Committee
12 Summer St.
Newport, RI 02840

Subject: Letter of Support for bill H 6016 to provide funding for critical coastal hazard decision support tools hosted at URI

Dear Chairman Abney,

I am reaching out about a bill 2025-H 6016 to provide funding for critical coastal hazard decision support tools hosted at URI.

Three URI-led research-based decision support tools require ongoing funding to serve the needs of Rhode Island – 1) RI Coastal Hazards Analysis, Modeling and Prediction system (RI-CHAMP), 2) STORMTOOLS, and 3) MyCoast Rhode Island were developed and implemented since 2014 in response to the expressed needs of Rhode Island's emergency managers, partner communities, state regulatory agencies, and military installations. These URI-led products play key roles in building capacity to address risks from present-day coastal storms, as well as increasing sea levels and storm intensity, to enhance RI's emergency management system, state and local resilience planning, coastal policy/permitting process, and community awareness and buy-in. These tools may soon go offline due a funding shortfall.

The Town of Charlestown is deeply concerned about the potential loss of access to these critical tools. Charlestown relies on its natural open spaces and coastal environment to support its economy. Tourism, recreation, and local businesses thrive because of Charlestown's well-preserved coastal landscapes, drawing visitors who fuel our economy and sustain our small-town character.

While we currently use a variety of online resources to gather and analyze coastal hazard information on our own, improved access to tools like RI-CHAMP, STORMTOOLS, and MyCoast would significantly enhance our ability to plan for and respond to storm impacts, sea level rise, and erosion. These decision-support tools offer data-driven insights that can help coastal communities like ours make informed decisions about resilience and adaptation. Ensuring their continued development and availability would be a major step forward in supporting Rhode Island's coastal towns.

We strongly support continued state funding to maintain and improve these resources, making them more accessible and beneficial for communities like Charlestown as we work to safeguard our future.

My colleagues and I urge you to provide these urgently needed funds so that we can continue to apply the tools and work with our URI colleagues to expand their capacity overtime and build resiliency of Rhode Island communities to storms and other coastal hazards.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital funding.

Sincerely,



Stephen McCandless
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