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March 18, 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,

On behalf of GZA's Hydrology & Hydraulics Climate Change Technical Practice and our 70 employees in Rhode Island, including several employees working with the University of Rhode Island (URI) on the Infrastructure Resilience Planning Framework Project and the ProvPort Master Plan, I am reaching out in support of 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 now 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 (including the ProvPort Master Plan), coastal policy/permitting process, and building community awareness and buy-in for investing in climate resilience. These tools may soon become unavailable due to a recent funding shortfall.

GZA is very concerned about the prospect of losing online access to these critical tools. GZA relies on these tools to cost-effectively meet the industry standard of care for providing coastal resiliency planning and engineering services. We rely on these tools for consulting services with municipalities, ProvPort, Inc., Quonset Development Corporation at the Port of Davisville, and other waterfront property owners on climate resiliency plans, natural hazard mitigation plans, property resilience assessments, municipal resilience program action grant projects and flood mitigation design projects. Our clients rely on our use of these tools to prioritize capital projects that will increase their ability to anticipate, withstand, respond to and recover rapidly from more frequent and more intense coastal storms. GZA's staff effectively use these tools to understand how coastal areas are predicted to be impacted by flooding and erosion and to advise clients on permitting and design of waterfront structures and nature-based solutions for addressing flood mitigation, shoreline protection and reducing the risks of property damage. We would deeply appreciate more investment by the State to ensure these tools remain available and effective for planning and design services.

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 over time and improve the resiliency of Rhode Island communities to storms and other coastal hazards.



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Thank you for your consideration of this vital funding. Please contact me at 781-278-3848 or wayne.cobleigh@gza.com if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

GZA GEOENVIRONMENTAL, INC.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wayne W. Cobleigh", written in a cursive style.

Wayne W. Cobleigh, CPSM
Vice President

Copy: Office of Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (by email)