



MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

May 13, 2025
Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of H 6252, Relating to Waters and Navigation – Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank and H 6276, Relating to Waters and Navigation – Rhode Island Property Resilience Act

Dear Representative Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

The City of Providence thanks Representatives Cortvriend, Spears, Carson, Speakman, Boylan, McGaw, and Bennett for their support of House Bill 6252 and for their appreciation of the importance of resiliency and stormwater abatement projects. The City also thanks Representative Carson for sponsoring H 6276 – the Rhode Island Property Resilience Act – and for championing self-sustaining funding streams for these critical projects.

On behalf of the City of Providence's Department of Sustainability, I write in support of House Bill H 6252, entitled Relating to Waters and Navigation – Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank and House Bill H 6276, Relating to Waters and Navigation – Rhode Island Property Resilience Act. While H 6252 would authorize the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank to establish a fund to provide financial assistance to local government units for resiliency and stormwater abatement projects, H 6276 would create the resilient Rhode Island property resilience act, leveraging an annual flood audit surcharge to fund local stormwater and resilience projects in our communities.

Though the City supports H 6276 to help address critical climate resilience needs, we strongly encourage the legislature to include considerations for assessing and developing a progressive sustainable and equitable surcharge structure that ensures an equitable distribution of the surcharge, factoring in measures of affordability. A flat rate applied uniformly to all properties could place a disproportionate burden on our low-to-moderate income residents, especially in our most vulnerable communities who face disproportional environmental injustices.

Sustainable stormwater and climate resilience work is a top-priority for the Smiley administration. This past year, we embarked on a Sustainable Stormwater and Sewer Task Force process to identify a sustainable financing mechanism for stormwater and sewer management in Providence. We are now in the process of turning those recommendations into action and planning for an equitable pre-implementation framework. The City recognizes the current impacts of climate change exacerbate our ability to manage both stormwater quality and quantity during extreme rain events in Providence. We support any and all efforts to build resilience to destructive flooding in communities across our state and see this pair of bills as a step in the right direction. Particularly at a time when federal funding for local climate resilience projects that benefit our environmental justice neighborhoods is uncertain at best and gutted at worst, identifying and implementing a diverse array of potential funding streams for these critical projects is a responsible and forward-thinking response.

Enacting these bills, particularly with an equitable surcharge structure pertaining to H6276, reassures Rhode Islanders that the state is being proactive and responsive to the needs of their communities and implementing structures to financially support projects that will tangibly improve quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration, and I deeply appreciate our shared commitment to building climate resilience in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Priscilla', followed by a horizontal line.

Priscilla De La Cruz
City of Providence, Director of Sustainability