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## **Rhode Island Public Works Association**

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**Date:** May 21, 2025

### **Chairman and Members**

House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Subject: Support for House Bill 5393 – An Act Relating to Highways – Sidewalk Maintenance on State Highways**

Dear Chairman and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Public Works Association (RIPWA), I write to express our strong support for **House Bill 5393**, an act that would clarify and reaffirm the State's responsibility for the maintenance of sidewalks along state highways.

We recognize and respect the authority and diligence of the House Finance Committee in evaluating legislation that promotes fiscal responsibility and equity across our state. In this spirit, House Bill 5393 presents a fair and necessary solution to a longstanding challenge faced by many municipalities regarding sidewalk maintenance on state-controlled roads.

There are several key reasons why RIPWA urges the Committee to advance this legislation:

### **Equity and Consistency**

Requiring the State to maintain sidewalks on State property ensures a uniform standard of safety and accessibility across Rhode Island. Currently, sidewalk conditions vary significantly between municipalities due to differing budget capacities and local policies. House Bill 5393 addresses this inconsistency, promoting equitable treatment for all communities, regardless of size or resources.

### **Public Safety**

Sidewalks that are properly maintained are critical to pedestrian safety. By making the State responsible for their upkeep, Rhode Island can ensure timely repairs and ongoing inspections. This proactive approach will reduce the risk of injuries and improve mobility for residents, especially seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities.

### **Financial Relief for Municipalities**

This legislation would ease a significant financial burden on local governments, many of which already face tight budgets and growing demands for essential services. By transferring responsibility for maintenance (not snow removal) to the State, cities and towns can reallocate limited resources to other critical infrastructure needs without compromising pedestrian safety.

## **Efficiency in Maintenance**

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) is better positioned to carry out coordinated and efficient sidewalk maintenance on State roads. Centralizing this function under RIDOT allows for streamlined planning, standardized practices, and economies of scale that can result in more cost-effective and timely repairs.

House Bill 5393 is a commonsense measure that clarifies the State's jurisdiction and aligns maintenance responsibility with ownership and oversight. It is a step toward a more efficient, fair, and safe transportation infrastructure across Rhode Island.

We respectfully urge the House Finance Committee to pass this important legislation and stand behind the cities and towns that work hard every day to keep Rhode Island moving safely and effectively.

Thank you for your attention and leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,

**Stephen L. Daignault Jr.**

**President**

Rhode Island Public Works Association