



# The Preservation Society of Newport County

February 27, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney  
Chair, House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street  
Providence RI 02903

I am writing on behalf of the Preservation Society of Newport County to share concerns regarding the proposed increase in cruise ship landing/embark fees and the potential impact on Newport's tourism economy. We ask the committee to consider these observations as it evaluates the broader implications for the state.

Newport's cruise ship activity has not fully returned to pre-pandemic levels. Prior to COVID, the city welcomed more than 50 cruise ships each year. In 2025, arrivals were in the low 40s and this year we predict the number to be in the low 30's. In addition, the number of motorcoach groups associated with a visiting cruise ship visiting key cultural sites - such as The Breakers and Marble House - has dropped from 8-10 groups per ship to roughly 4-5. Anecdotally, we understand that many ships are not sailing at full capacity, which further reduces the number of visitors coming ashore.

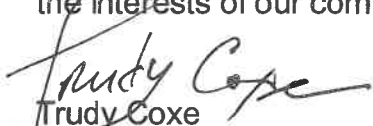
Booking agents who work closely with New England ports have indicated that it is difficult to predict how cruise lines will respond to higher landing/embark fees. However, they consistently note that cruise companies are highly sensitive to changes affecting their operating costs or logistics. Newport already presents challenges because it is a tender only port, which is more weather dependent and less convenient than pier-side docking.

Given these factors, we worry that increasing fees at a time when ship traffic and passenger volume are still recovering may unintentionally signal that Newport - and by extension, Rhode Island - is becoming less welcoming to the cruise business. Cruise lines will ultimately make decisions based on what best supports their bottom line. It would be unwise to assume that they will continue choosing Newport regardless of cost or operational challenges.

For these reasons, we respectfully suggest that the state consider monitoring the 2026 season at the current landing/embark fee before any consideration of implementing additional fee increases. If we observe a measurable decline in cruise visitors that can reasonably be linked to Newport's current landing/embark fee, that data would put us in a stronger position to reassess policy in the future.

We also hope the Committee will explore whether the City of Newport or the State has engaged directly with cruise industry representatives to understand how they evaluate port decisions. A clearer sense of their business considerations would help all of us anticipate where the dominos may fall.

Thank you for your time and for your thoughtful consideration of this issue. Our goal is simply to ensure that Rhode Island continues to support a balanced, sustainable tourism economy - one that recognizes the value of cruise visitors while also protecting the interests of our communities.

  
Trudy Coxé  
CEO & Executive Director