



April 2, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI

Re: Opposition to H7127, Article 5, Section 8 – Newport Landing and Boarding Fees

Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Destinations North America LLC, I write to express strong opposition to the Governor's proposed increase in cruise ship landing fees included in Article 5, Section 8 of H7127. As a shore excursion tour operator with over 25 years of continuous operation in Newport, Rhode Island, we have a firsthand understanding of how port economics directly affect our business, our employees and the broader Newport tourism community we serve.

Cruise passengers are active contributors to Newport's local economy. Our guests patronize local restaurants, visit cultural attractions, shop at independent retailers and return home as ambassadors for the destination. A January 2026 Tourism Economics report found Rhode Island's cruise industry supported 500 jobs and \$131 million in economic output in 2024. This industry activity sustains businesses like ours including our local vendor partners and guides we employ each season.

Newport has already taken a significant step, increasing landing fees from \$6 to \$20 per passenger to fund infrastructure improvements. We understood and supported that investment. However, the proposed additional \$10 increase, implemented on a compressed timeline, places Rhode Island at a material competitive disadvantage. Cruise lines make itinerary decisions based on the total cost of calling at a port and neighboring states are actively investing in their infrastructure and aggressively courting the same ships. Lost port calls mean lost excursion business, lost local spending and lost jobs.

For a company of our size, operating seasonally in a market as price-sensitive as cruise tourism, the ripple effects of reduced ship calls are felt immediately and deeply. We respectfully urge the Committee to reject the proposed fee increase in H7127 and to work with the cruise industry to ensure Newport remains a competitive, welcoming destination for years to come.

We appreciate your consideration and your continued support of Rhode Island's tourism economy.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Matte
President & Owner
Destinations North America