



For a thriving New England

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Via Electronic Mail

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Room 35, State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: CLF Supports House Bill No. 7127, Article 6, Question 5 – Green Economy and Clean Energy Bonds

Dear Chair Abney:

The Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill No. 7127, Article 6, Question 5, which authorizes a referendum on the Green Economy and Clean Energy Bond. We offer our support for this bill, as well as a few suggestions.

Founded in 1966, CLF is a member-supported non-profit advocacy organization working to protect public health and the environment and build healthy communities in Rhode Island and throughout New England. CLF supports policies that increase the state’s capacity for environmentally beneficial economic growth while also providing for necessary climate resilience, brownfield remediation, and open space/land conservation.

This bond would allocate \$50 million to a variety of environmental and infrastructure projects. CLF is pleased to see \$20 million put forward for the newly established Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund, which is an essential way for municipalities across Rhode Island to combat the increasing impacts of climate change. All 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island have participated in the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank’s precursor Municipal Resilience Program, underlining the necessity of this funding.

CLF strongly supports funding energy efficiency infrastructure and recognizes that doing so through a bond can make a lot of sense, as our income tax is more progressive than ratepayer funding. However, only bonding out \$10 million demonstrates a lack of commitment and provides only an insubstantial, temporary shift away from ratepayer funding. The state’s 2025 Climate Action Strategy provides guidance on potential effective and valuable investments in our energy infrastructure. Following this guidance would produce net benefits for Rhode Islanders and make utility rates more stable and affordable. We should incorporate and act upon these recommendations.

Crucially, CLF was disappointed to see that funding for critical land and water conservation programs was not included in the Green Economy and Clean Energy Bond being put before the voters this fall. These funds have been an anchor of past bonds, which have been overwhelmingly popular. CLF is concerned by the prospect of these programs being removed.

CLF strongly supports House Bill No. 8144, introduced by Representative Cotter, which adds \$17.5 million to the Green Economy Bond as written in the Governor's budget. H-8144 would fund programs that have been historically funded by the green economy bonds, including agricultural land preservation, open space land acquisition, local open space grants, and outdoor recreation efforts. Our land trust and conservation partners within the environmental movement are able to leverage these state appropriations to bring in additional millions of dollars in matching funds from the federal government to support our economy and maintain funding of popular programs that provide a direct and immediate benefit to Rhode Islanders.

The land acquired through these programs is a public benefit enjoyed by Rhode Islanders from all walks of life. It is available to the public for boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, hunting, biking, and simply enjoying all the salutary effects that nature has to offer. By promoting outdoor recreation, we connect our kids to nature and expand our understanding of the interconnection of our health, our environment, and our prosperity. These programs protect our farmlands from uncontrolled development and provide a lifeline to our struggling agriculture sector. They also protect vulnerable habitats for Rhode Island's wildlife and conserve our precious natural resources—not for financial gain, but for long-term public use.

Whether we look at land conservation as a way to address a changing climate or to give kids a place to run around after school, we all benefit by maintaining funding for these programs. It is critical that the Finance Committee support this bond package and add the additional funding proposed in H-8144.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



Darrèll Brown
Vice President, Rhode Island
Conservation Law Foundation

cc: Members of the Finance Committee