



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

April 8, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7099 An Act Relating to Parks and Recreational Areas – Preference for Residents

Dear Chairman Abney,

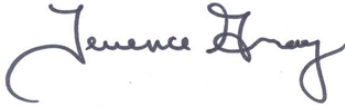
Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7099, which would require preference be given to Rhode Island residents when making reservations at campsites and other recreational facilities and would provide discounts to 100% disabled veterans for certain fees. This letter is not intended as a position in support of or opposition to the bill, but offers technical comments intended to provide clarity in the bill.

DEM is not conceptually opposed to the idea of providing Rhode Island residents with preference when making reservations at state recreational facilities. However, any such legislation should account for the different methods and systems in place for making reservations at each class of facility. For example, reservations at state campgrounds are handled through a third-party vendor contracted by DEM whereas reservations of picnic tables and shelters at state parks are handled directly by DEM staff. These differences mean that a one-size-fits-all approach to providing Rhode Island residents with preference is not feasible. Specific to this legislation, we are concerned that the bill is overly broad in that it does not identify the specific type(s) of recreational facilities that its provisions apply to. We would be happy to provide further information about the different systems in place for making reservations and how a Rhode Island resident preference might best be effectuated.

DEM is also not conceptually opposed to providing 100% disabled veterans with discounts on fees such as those proposed in this legislation. State law currently waives parking fees at state beaches and access to our state golf course for certain individuals, including 100% disabled veterans, and establishes a verification process whereby individuals provide a third-party credential confirming that they meet the criteria set out in state law. Any proposal to provide additional fee discounts or waivers should similarly require that individuals provide a defined credential to DEM which verifies that they meet the eligibility criteria to receive the benefit.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of Legislative Affairs, at ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Samuel Azzinaro
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director