



Mayor of Providence

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Brett P. Smiley

April 8, 2026

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

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my support for House Resolution 7707, which would authorize an appropriation of \$800,000 to WaterFire Providence.

WaterFire is one of Rhode Island's most significant economic assets, generating millions in tax revenue for the State and supporting over 1,000 jobs. These impacts are felt directly in the City of Providence. The organization attracts approximately one million visitors annually, bringing foot traffic that supports local restaurants, hotels and small businesses while boosting the City's creative economy. WaterFire also offers programs that support workforce and artist development and provides space for local arts groups, supporting Providence's cultural and economic vitality.

The City of Providence remains committed to supporting WaterFire. In 2025, the City signed a twenty-year lease which keeps the WaterFire Arts Center in City ownership while giving WaterFire full use of the facility to host its programs and events.

WaterFire's landmark events are free to the public; the organization is not earning revenue from ticket sales in the same way other organizations are. This combined with rising operating costs and shifts in private sponsorship have all placed increasing pressure on the organization's financial sustainability.

This \$800,000 investment is critical to help ensure that WaterFire remains a reliable driver of tourism and continues to contribute to Rhode Island's economic competitiveness.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support House Resolution 7707.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett Smiley".

Brett P. Smiley  
Mayor