

- Good evening Chairman Abney and members of the committee. My name is Kristen Adamo and I am the President & CEO at GoProvidence, the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 8354, which would authorize \$18 million in bonding for Roger Williams Park Zoo.
- My organization is responsible for bringing visitors to Rhode Island from all over the world. Nearly 8 million people visited Providence alone in 2024. And the Zoo is part of the package that lures them here.
- Like many of you, I am a native Rhode Islander and the zoo has been part of my life since I was a small child. While the zoo has an emotional pull for us all, it also serves a powerful economic generator and tourism asset.

- My organization drew a digital fence around the Roger Williams Park Zoo and looked at who visited the zoo in 2025. Of the roughly half million people who visited the zoo last year, only 51.8% percent are from Rhode Island. The other 48.2% were from out of state.
- These are people who stay in hotels, have meals, visit retails stores, and do other things to support the Rhode Island economy.
- In my line of work, we are all about “heads in beds,” which means filling hotels rooms and collecting that hotel revenue for the state. The decline of business travel has made getting those weekday stays even more difficult.
- To fill that gap, my organization is investing in a larger group tour initiative, developing and

promoting bus tours that will bring new visitors to Rhode Island. The Roger Williams Park Zoo will be a cornerstone of that new program.

- Investing in the zoo is certainly an opportunity to provide Rhode Island families with a vibrant educational entertainment experience. But it is also a smart business decision that will help bolster Rhode Island's tourism economy.