

April 13, 2026

Re: Support for House Bill 8144

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Abby Benson, and I serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Fort Adams Trust. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 8144, and specifically Section 1(l), which would direct \$5 million in Green Economy and Clean Energy Bond funding to the preservation, restoration, and improved public accessibility of historic Fort Adams in Fort Adams State Park in the City of Newport.

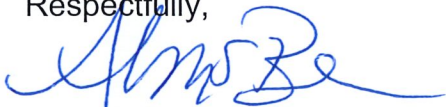
As someone who has spent her career largely in public administration, currently as Vice President of Administration and Finance at the University of Rhode Island and formerly as an officer in the United States Coast Guard, I am aware of how important it is to maintain our critical public assets and infrastructure and to be good stewards of public funds. I was raised in Newport and Fort Adams played an enduring role in my childhood, and now I enjoy visiting the Fort with my own children. I am proud to serve as a board member of the Fort Adams Trust, that is charged with maintaining this important historic landmark. It needs this investment to ensure that both residents and visitors have a safe, educational, and unique experience when they visit Fort Adams.

Fort Adams is the largest coastal fortification in the United States - a National Historic Landmark that has stood at the entrance to Narragansett Bay for nearly 200 years. According to a University of Rhode Island study commissioned by DEM, Fort Adams State Park generates \$63.9 million in annual economic output and supports 750+ jobs, making it the highest-impact site in the Rhode Island State Parks system. It is irreplaceable - as a historic asset, as an economic engine, and as a point of pride for Newport and for Rhode Island.

The Trust has invested millions in stabilization and restoration, and we are committed stewards. But the scale of the fortification is immense and coastal conditions are unforgiving. This \$5 million investment would fund urgent preservation work and open areas of the fort that cannot safely welcome the public without intervention.

I urge the Committee to support and advance H8144 so that Rhode Island voters have the opportunity to affirm their support for this landmark in November. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Abby Benson

Board Member, Fort Adams Trust
Middletown, RI
abbysbenson@gmail.com