

**Date:** 4/13/26

**To:** Marvin Abney, Chair of House Finance

**Re:** Support for House Bill 8144

This is Don McRobert, a resident of Scituate RI and a new member of our town's Conservation Commission.

I am writing to support House Bill 8144 because it's so important for Rhode Island and all states for that matter. Rhode Island especially reaps huge benefits from our natural landscape and all additional dollars used to support efforts to set aside, make accessible to public use, and develop responsibly are well worth the commitment. An added \$10 million for conservation goes a long ways to keeping our waters clean, something we know about in Scituate. We also know that all water flows to the Bay, probably the most valuable natural resource in RI in terms not only of commerce, but also seafood, recreation, jobs, and tourism. If our land becomes compromised thru neglect and abuse, our water will be effected and go the same route.

Conservation is a way to spend our monies to fund projects that we the little people will use and enjoy, it provides a direct benefit to all. We know how much residents of RI love our hiking trails, our rivers, parks, woodlands, beaches, etc. With the current administration in Washington turning back the clock to allow mining, drilling, development and in general lack of regulation, there's even more reason to make sure we do the right thing here in RI and preserve what we have. Once it's gone it's gone, that's a fact, there's no getting back some things once the damage is done.

On that thought....I grew up outside of Buffalo NY in the 50s-70s, Lake Erie was not taken care of, it was a dumping ground, just as land used to be a dumping ground. Steel companies dumped waste slag into the lake's edge, ships deposited oil and fuels into the water, summer cottages had septic pipes running out into the lake. When we went to the beach in Angola, there were always dead fish washed up onshore and it stunk. The pro-environment, pro-regulation climate that ensued took hold, it took many many years, but with thoughtful policy and \$\$\$ Lake Erie returned to become what is now a game fishing destination. That's just one example of the good result of finally realizing that it's better to be pro-active and stay ahead of it than wait until it hits the fan and it's even more expensive to fix or it's not even repairable..... which I think is everyone's concern these days. Many of us live with artesian wells and depend not only on good water practices but on good ground practices....the soil and rock acting as our natural filter.

I'm a bird lover and protecting bird habitat is essential, they're another one of those indicators of the health of a region. How often now do we hear that the songbird population is in decline? Frequently. Land must be set aside, never to be developed, in order to provide the migration routes these creatures require to continue. I support Local Open Space Matching Grants and Open Space Programs to do just that. Same for farms, there aren't many left, but our local apple farms are wonderful, they not only supply a healthy food item but they have become entertainment destinations offering picking in fields and animal feeding. I see many city families driving out to our area to enjoy time in the orchard or at the farm. There's value in that too.

Here in Scituate our Land Trust over past 2 years has rejuvenated trail systems, put up educational signage along the paths about both history and the landscape. They're being heavily used, have gotten good reports. Being outdoors walking is healthy, we need to encourage that and keep areas where that can be done. Thank you for listening, please do the right thing and make the Green Bond stronger than ever!

Sincerely,  
Don McRobert