

FROM: Elizabeth Gibbs, Middletown
RE: SUPPORT - House Bill 8144
DATE: April 14, 2026
TO: Rep. Marvin Abney, Chair, RI House Finance Committee

Dear Representative Abney,

I'm writing to ask for your support for **H8144 and \$17.5 Million in additional conservation funding in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond.**

In particular, the need for \$10 Million for conservation programs is critical. We need farmland, state and local open space and recreational open space to maintain this quality of life and the state's economy.

Development threatens every unprotected piece of land in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders from all walks of life benefit from natural spaces—from small urban parks to large DEM properties, contact with nature promotes mental and physical health. As an example, Norman Bird Sanctuary in Middletown, on whose board I serve, remained open for trail use during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. People still tell us today what a lifesaver that was, to be able to get outside amidst the fear and anxiety that permeated those days.

We especially cannot afford to allow agriculture to become financially unsustainable for our farming families. This bill is a critical tool for leverage. For every \$1.00 spent on conservation in the state is matched by \$1.70 in federal and philanthropic funding.

Many thanks for your consideration and for all your hard work on behalf of Aquidneck Islanders and all residents of the state of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Gibbs
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Middletown, RI 02842