

Glenn Diana Sherman  
Pawtucket, RI 02860  
Testimony in support of House Bill 8144

Dear Chairman Marvin Abney,

I am a resident of Pawtucket, RI and I believe that House Bill 8144 is essential for the health and wellbeing of our state, the wildlife that depends on open spaces, and the farmers who have built their livelihood on the land. The \$17.5 million in additional conservation funding in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond, with \$10 million for conservation programs, will be critical to preserving landscapes, watersheds, and farms and your constituents will thank you for the access to recreational hiking trails and the preservation of farmland for our local food economy.

I am a birder, a hiker, a former farmer, and an outdoor enthusiast. My three children come with me to explore miles of conserved land made possible by the state and local conservation groups. As a birder, I volunteer for conservation groups to monitor bluebird houses and spend hours exploring the woods looking for plants, birds, and wildlife. These experiences are critical to my happiness and my children's future, so that we can preserve places for wildlife and thus preserve some ecological balance across the state – in urban, suburban, and rural Rhode Island.

I have also worked on farms as a cheesemaker, where we leased land from landowners who have sold the development rights to the local ag trust so that those pastures can remain in agriculture and feed the cows from whom we harvested milk to make cheese. That land was in coastal Rhode Island, where, like much of this beautiful state, was prime real estate for second homes along the coast. Without the ag trust's help to conserve the land, it would be much harder to piece together enough land to sustain that farm business. I am personally concerned about the pressure to develop homes over the conservation of our natural resources and believe that those natural resources are critical for a sustainable quality of life in this state. I believe that preserving farmland and making it accessible to farmers is crucial, especially in Rhode Island where land is so expensive. Local food systems is the backbone of our economy and is critical for resilient systems in our state. I wanted to start a farm but decided not to because of high land prices and the need to decide between raising a family and starting a farm business.

I am asking that you vote to include \$17.5 million to the Green Bond, especially \$10 million for conservation programs. The \$3 million for State Open Space Program will enhance access to outdoor recreation while preserving natural resources. The \$2 million for Local Open Space Matching Grants will prioritize valuable habitats, like the preservation and restoration of salt water marshes, that are critical to mitigate the effects of climate change. Finally, the \$2 million for farmland preservation will support our local food system and help farmers acquire land and run viable businesses in this state.

I'd like to thank the Finance Committee for listening to my concerns. In light of this and others' testimonies, I ask that you include \$17.5 million for FY 2027 Green Economy Bond to support conservation programming and farmland preservation. Thank you.

Glenn Sherman  
Pawtucket, RI