



RIEEA

Rhode Island Environmental
Education Association

10 Davol Square, Suite 100
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
RIEEA.org

Jeanine Silversmith

On Behalf of the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association

H-8144, Green Bond

House Finance

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

The Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA) supports H-8144, and respectfully urges its passage. RIEEA stands in strong support of environmental justice, ensuring that every Rhode Islander enjoys access to clean, welcoming outdoor places to play, work, and learn. Time in nature provides opportunity for physical activity, critical and creative thinking, interaction with and connection to community members, and so much more. Research¹ shows that unstructured play and interaction with the natural world are important for healthy development in children as well as the physical, mental, and social and emotional health of both children and adults. We also know that those of us who have access to outdoor spaces are more likely to be engaged in protecting those spaces and feel less anxiety about the climate crisis and environmental concerns than those who do not have such access.

While we are pleased that the original Green Bond put forth by the Governor includes funding for important programs such as the Narragansett Bay Watershed Restoration Program, the Resilient Rhody Fund, brownfields remediation, and DEM facilities improvements, there is absolutely no funding for Local Open Space, State Open Space, and Farmland Preservation, and only \$1M for Outdoor Recreation Grants.

H-8144 will address this by adding:

- \$3 million for the State Open Space Program
- \$2 million for the Local Open Space Matching Grant
- \$3 million for the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program

¹ <https://research.childrenandnature.org/>

- \$2 million for Farmland Preservation

This request is consistent with the RI Department of Environmental Management's FY27 capital budget request in August 2025.

The RIEEA membership includes over 400 individuals including educators, scientists, advocates, students, parents, and others as well as over 70 organizations² including Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Save The Bay, the Rhode Island Conservation Districts, and Tomaquag Museum. RIEEA's membership and supporters care deeply about Rhode Island's natural places, our health, and environmental and economic stability.

² <https://www.rieea.org/about-us/organizational-members/>