

April 14, 2026

To: House Finance Committee

I am writing today to urge you to include additional funding for land conservation as proposed in bill H8144, scheduled for hearing this afternoon.

In my role as land protection director for the South Kingstown Land Trust for over 22 years (now retired), I worked with dozens of landowners who wished to preserve the land they had loved for decades. The state's open space bond fund and farmland funding were always key to getting these deals done.

It usually takes years, and sometimes over a decade, for families to weigh their options for disposition of their land and come to a decision to protect the land they have valued for many years, and often multiple generations. Often the families making these decisions have many individuals needing to arrive at a consensus, which can, and has, taken years of discussion. And often, a defining moment, such as a death or illness in the family, has precipitated the need to make that decision.

Whenever the landowners need to act to protect their land, the funding must be available for a land trust to make that happen. Logically, funding for land preservation should be a dedicated line item in DEM's budget, and not subject to these repeated pleas to the legislature. Families rely on the State, and other federal, local, and private funds, to be there when they need them.

So, please support this bill to make the Green Bond Greener in 2026!

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Riccitelli
Wakefield RI