

April 13, 2026

Dear Chair of House Finance, Chairman Marvin Abney, and Committee Members,

My name is Kenda Swartz, and I live in Bristol, RI.

I'm writing in support of House Bill 8144, and to share a growing concern about how climate change is already affecting Rhode Island. We are seeing more flooding, more strain on our natural systems, and more pressure on the places that quietly protect us every day.

Our forests, farmlands, and open spaces are part of the solution. They store carbon, absorb stormwater, and provide habitat for wildlife, while also giving people places to walk, breathe, and reconnect. These lands are our green infrastructure, and once they're gone, we don't get them back.

That's why I'm concerned about the level of funding in this bill for conservation. If we don't invest now, we risk losing the very landscapes that help keep our communities resilient.

I respectfully ask that you include \$17.5 million in additional funding in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond, including \$10 million for conservation programs. This support would go directly toward:

- \$3 million in Outdoor Recreation Grants to improve access to parks and outdoor spaces for municipalities and Native American tribes
- \$3 million for the State Open Space Program to protect important lands and strengthen existing state management areas
- \$2 million in Local Open Space Matching Grants to help communities and land trusts conserve local open space
- \$2 million for farmland preservation, which is especially urgent given the current backlog and the risk of losing federal matching funds

These are thoughtful, practical investments that will protect what makes Rhode Island special while helping us prepare for what's ahead.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kenda Swartz