

April 13, 2026

Re: Support for House Bill 8144

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Maryellen Atkins, and I serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Fort Adams Trust. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 8144, and specifically Section 1(l), which would direct \$5 million in Green Economy and Clean Energy Bond funding to the preservation, restoration, and improved public accessibility of historic Fort Adams in Fort Adams State Park in the City of Newport.

Like many other residents in Newport, my family history is deeply rooted in the construction of the fort. My grandmother's great-grandfather, Daniel Harrington, came to Newport as an Irish stonemason specifically to help build Fort Adams. For me and my community, the fort is not just a place we go for recreation; it is a concrete tie to our heritage here on Aquidneck Island and a landmark truly worth preserving.

Fort Adams is the largest coastal fortification in the United States - a National Historic Landmark that has stood at the entrance to Narragansett Bay for nearly 200 years.

According to a University of Rhode Island study commissioned by DEM, Fort Adams State Park generates \$63.9 million in annual economic output and supports 750+ jobs, making it the highest-impact site in the Rhode Island State Parks system. It is irreplaceable - as a historic asset, as an economic engine, and as a point of pride for Newport and for Rhode Island.

The Trust has invested millions in stabilization and restoration, and we are committed stewards. But the scale of the fortification is immense and coastal conditions are

unforgiving. This \$5 million investment would fund urgent preservation work and open areas of the fort that cannot safely welcome the public without intervention.

I urge the Committee to support and advance H8144 so that Rhode Island voters have the opportunity to affirm their support for this landmark in November. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Maryellen Atkins

Board Member, Fort Adams Trust