



Re. Bill H-8144 AN ACT RELATING TO CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM -- 2026 BOND REFERENDA

FOR

Dear Chairman Abney,

Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD) is writing to express its support for Bill H-8144. As an organization with the mission of conserving the natural resources of Providence County, continued state funding for State and Local Open Space Programs as well as Farmland Preservation is extremely important to us. Many federal sources of funding for this work require a nonfederal match, and the Rhode Island Land Trust Council has shown that \$1.70 in federal and private funding is received for every \$1.00 in state conservation investment. Neglecting to fund these important programs leaves federal money that can help Rhode Island on the table.

Ensuring that some of our land remains as open space and farmland has a huge benefit for all Rhode Islanders. Rhode Island has the most expensive farmland in the nation, and losing any more farmland than we already have puts 2,500 farm jobs at risk and cuts off local sources for healthy food. Our office receives countless calls from young people who want to grow food for our state, and only need help finding land on which to get started. The Agricultural Land Preservation Commission has many great options for preserving farmland in a way that benefits current landowners, future farmers, and the state's taxpayers, but without funding, this good work will end.

Preserving state and local funding for open space is equally important. Rhode Island's wetlands and forests mitigate the impacts of climate change, absorb flood waters, provide wildlife habitat and offer the outdoor recreational opportunities that our residents need. As we build housing to accommodate a growing population, ensuring that all residents have access to open space has never been more important. We cannot afford to delay funding for these programs for another two years.

NRICD stands in strong support of H-8144 and urges the Committee to consider it strongly. We look forward to continuing to partner with the State to help Rhode Islanders grow healthy food, tend to their natural resources, and steward the natural spaces that make Rhode Island so special. Thank you for your consideration.