

Dear Chairman Abney,

My name is Wren Wilson and I live in the Edgewood neighborhood of Cranston. I'm writing to ask for your support of House Bill 8144. Now more than ever, there is a critical need for \$17.5 million in additional conservation funding in the FY2027 Green Economy Bond, especially the \$10 million for conservation programs. Climate change, the slackening of federal

I moved to Rhode Island in 2016 to attend college at the University of Rhode Island. I had the opportunity to obtain my B.S. in Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the only land grant university in the state, and that experience was critical to shaping me as the environmental professional I am today. The care, passion, and utter dedication of my professors to not only the environment overall, but our precious slice of it here at home, influenced me to remain here after graduation. I spent years hiking at John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, and kayaking Narrow River. I learned to identify plants at Great Swamp Management Area, and I learned to identify birds at Ninigret Pond. I learned so much from the fields, forests, and rivers, of Rhode Island that I decided I wanted to do my part in conserving them too. Now as an adult near my 30's, I do. Both professionally, as a consulting forester, and individually, as a citizen who deeply cares about others having access to the same opportunities in Rhode Island that I have had. Climate change is threatening our posterity in many ways, but it's a threat we can fight together!

I am asking you to include \$17.5 million to the green bond, especially the \$10 million for conservation programs for this reason. We must ensure there is funding to conserve important forests, farmlands, and open spaces across Rhode Island, and that we can continue to improve public recreation opportunities. The \$2 million in Local Open Space Matching Grants to municipalities, land trusts, and conservation non-profits will help strengthen the incredible work already being done by these grassroots collectives of passionate individuals. This funding will provide the necessary agency to support local initiatives and conserve important resources on a small, but vastly impactful scale. Following the same theme of granting agency and building off of existing momentum, the \$3 million in Outdoor Recreation Grants for municipalities and Native American tribes will strengthen their ability to build and revitalize playgrounds and parks. Spending time outdoors is hugely beneficial for the health and well-being of children. Speaking from experiences, it also helps build them into the environmental advocates of tomorrow.

If we're able to get the ball rolling on the work that needs to be done today, it should make those kids' jobs a lot easier. Thank you for taking the time to hear about my concerns, and thank you especially for taking the time to read about why Rhode Island's green spaces are so important to me. I urge the committee to include \$17.5 million in additional funding for the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond, including \$10 million for conservation programs.

It isn't rare for the tiniest state to set the nation's standard's. We can do it for our stunning, rigorous environmental policy too.

Thank you again,

Wren R. Wilson

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