



Audubon Society of Rhode Island

13 April 2026

Maxwell McFarland, Director of Advocacy
Audubon Society of Rhode Island

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 8151 — Blue Wave Bond for Coastal Preparedness Act

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, representing our 17,000 members and supporters, I respectfully urge you to support H8151.

As one of Rhode Island's largest conservation organizations, we steward nearly 10,000 acres of land for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and people, to protect and improve the resilience of this state.

Climate-related hazards are an existential threat to Rhode Island, its communities, and its resilience. Increasing sea level rise, coastal erosion, storm surge, extreme precipitation, inland and coastal flooding are all contributors.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island recognizes these present dangers and we aim to protect critical areas. Spanning wetlands like Touisset Marsh to riverine areas like Davis Memorial Wildlife Refuge along the Hunt River. According to the U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index, Rhode Island nationally ranks 14th in vulnerability to flooding and 6th in vulnerability to storms, with a significant number of Rhode Island's coastal communities ranking in the 98th and 99th percentile for each. The funding outlined in the Blue Wave Bond invests in dunes, shorelines, salt marshes, and other nature-based solutions effective at combatting these coastal climate hazards.

Another vital aspect to this Blue Wave Bond is stormwater infrastructure. At Audubon, we believe in the importance of strategic stormwater management. As a collaborative effort between our organization, The Nature Conservancy, and the Providence Parks Department, the Stormwater Innovation Center works to explore best practices for sustainable stormwater management and green infrastructure design. The Blue Bond will ensure that proven, protective projects related to stormwater and wastewater are instituted across the state.

The investments proposed in the Blue Wave Bond will finance projects proven, by our organization and others, to be effective at mitigating the imminent threats created by climate change. Funding nature-based systems and improving Rhode Island's infrastructure will protect our wildlife, our coasts, and our communities. We ask the Committee to support this bill and provide the referendum to voters.

Regards,
Maxwell McFarland, Director of Advocacy

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