



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

April 29, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

I write this letter in support of H8271, a direct allocation of \$1,000,000 in FY27 to the 401 Tech Bridge for the purpose of funding a study to explore the use of Seagliders in Rhode Island, in conjunction with the Rhode Island Seaglider Initiative (RISI). RISI is a consortium of public, private, and community stakeholders working to increase awareness and adoption of Seagliders, all-electric, affordable, maritime vessels, in Rhode Island.

RISI is working with prominent stakeholders including the City of Providence, East Providence, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and Skills For Rhode Island's Future to identify ways to upgrade Rhode Island's maritime infrastructure, expand economic opportunities and create high-paying jobs, and increase sustainable and affordable transportation options for Rhode Island residents and visitors.

The feasibility study would seek to understand, assess, and verify the use and operation of Seagliders in Rhode Island to realize three key benefits for the state.

Drive economic growth and create high-paying jobs

An initial economic impact study analyzing the effects of a Seaglider network on Rhode Island's economy shows that Seaglider network could add over 200 jobs and over \$100 million annually to the state economy. Further analysis would identify ways to expand business and job training opportunities and bolster Rhode Island's Blue Economy.

Expand convenient transportation access.

Seagliders provide high-speed, convenient, and affordable transportation between coastal destinations, allowing passengers to board at existing docks and reach their destinations in up to a third of the time it would take by existing forms of transportation, offering residents and visitors of Rhode Island access across the state and between other East Coast destinations.

In addition, many of Rhode Island's economic and cultural hubs such as Providence, Newport, and Block Island serve as regional tourist hubs. Newport alone draws four million passengers annually while Block Island sees over 20,000 daily visitors each summer. RISI's work to operationalize Seagliders will sustainably move tourists in and

out of these hubs, which will decongest Rhode Island's roads and alleviate the strain that large influx of cars put on local infrastructure.

The feasibility study would identify concrete actions to realize the potential of a Seaglider network servicing more than 1 million passengers each year.

Provide sustainable transportation options

Rhode Island has set ambitious climate goals, aiming for net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050, and transportation makes up one-third of the state's emissions, making sustainable and accessible transportation options a necessity to meet climate goals.

All-electric Seagliders provide a zero-emission transportation solution. The feasibility study would explore how to leverage Seagliders to eliminate thousands of tons of carbon and GHG emissions yearly.

Proper planning and study for sustainable economic growth is essential to cementing Rhode Island's leadership as the epicenter of the Blue Economy. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett P. Smiley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "B".

Brett P. Smiley
Mayor of Providence