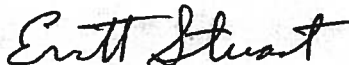


406 Stony Lane
North Kingstown, RI 02852

February 15, 2022

To: Chairman Abney, RI House Finance Committee

From: Everett Stuart (evstuart@verizon.net)



RE: Proposed Green Economy Bond --- House bill H7123

Dear Chairman Abney:

I'm writing in support of the Green Economy Bond, but ask that the open space portion be increased, especially by adding a section for continued farmland preservation.

Bonding for the preservation of both agricultural and forest lands has historically been very popular with RI voters, passing by wide margins. Citizens of RI recognize the value of these lands and are willing to spend their tax dollars to help support local food production and forest habitat. During the recent Covid restrictions thousands of citizens from all over RI flocked to conserved lands affording them the opportunity to recharge themselves in this stressful time. This demonstration of an important open-space value sometimes is under appreciated.

Past State financial support for farmland and forest land protection, both through conservation easements and outright purchase, have been enthusiastically embraced by the many landowners willing to participate. The *RI Agricultural Land Preservation Commission (ALPC)* has a waiting list of interested landowners seeking to preserve their farms through the sale of development rights. The ALPC now has limited funds available from past bond issues and there is none identified in the current draft of the Green Economy Bond.

I ask that the H7123 be amended to include an addition \$3 million for farmland preservation, which will attract matching funding from local governments, local land trusts, and the US Department of Agriculture.

I also ask that you strongly consider additional funding for both DEM's *Local Land Acquisition Matching Grant Program* and the *State Land Acquisition Program*. These immensely valuable and popular programs need funding adequate to meet the strong demand and the rapidly rising cost of Real Estate in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views and hope you expand funding for both farmland protection and the other open space programs.