

March 12, 2024

Hon. Robert Craven Chair, House Judiciary Rhode Island State House Providence, RI 02903

RE: Pawtuxet Green Revival - Support HB-7455 (McNamara, Potter, Solomon, Bennett)

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

For the past two years, over 1,000 neighbors from Warwick and Cranston have been fighting together as "Pawtuxet Green Revival" re-open the historic Pawtuxet River Trail. This legislation – HB-7455 – will help to achieve that.

Warwick and Cranston residents have had access to the Pawtuxet River Trail for 60 plus years thanks to the efforts of the Boys Scouts and local leaders who built the Trail. In 2019, new owners purchased the land that the trail runs through. In 2022, the owners submitted a master plan for contractor storage units to be built on the flood plain adjacent to the trail and on the banks of the Pawtuxet River.

This plan was met with resistance by the community due to various environmental concerns. In response, the owners notoriously eliminated access to the public trail despite the Mayor's and other elected official's requests that the owners keep the trail open. The owners' master plan was then approved by the Warwick Planning Board on the condition that 12 acres of wetlands, which includes the Trail, be placed into a conservation easement. The owners then withdrew their application. This terminated the conservation easement which would have restored the Pawtuxet River trail. The owners of 175 Post Road then demolished the bridge on the Warwick side of the Pawtuxet River Trail and installed cameras and signs prohibiting the public from accessing the Trail.

The legislation before you would permit neighbors to file a legal action arguing that the public's 60 years of access to the Trail should matter and should allow for a permanent easement. Notably, the land in question is in a floodplain, a floodway and in state wetlands. The Trail is, arguably, the highest and best use of this narrow stretch of land. Finally, the legislation was narrowly written to avoid opening a "can of worms" with other footpath or public access issues happening around the state.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this incredibly important legislation to our community.

Sincerely Yours, Nicholas Fox of 283 Atlantic Ave, Warwick, RI 02888 Monica Maye 66 Kenyon Rd Cranston, RI 02910

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