

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Municipal Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: BILL NUMBER H-5905 – RELATING TO PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS -- PUBLIC USE OF PRIVATE LANDS-
LIABILITY LIMITATIONS**

Dear Chairman Craven and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I write to express our strong opposition to House Bill 5905, which proposes to amend the definition of "Owner" within the existing statute governing liability protections for lands open to the public for recreational use. Specifically, by removing the state and municipalities from this definition, this bill would strip local governments of crucial liability protections that have long encouraged public access to recreational lands without undue legal risk.

Currently, Rhode Island municipalities rely on these liability protections to maintain parks, trails, and other recreational areas accessible to residents and visitors alike. These protections ensure that municipalities can support outdoor activities without facing excessive legal exposure that could discourage investment in public spaces. By eliminating this safeguard, municipalities will be placed in a difficult position, potentially leading to restricted access to public lands due to concerns over liability.

The unintended consequences of this bill could include:

- Increased financial burdens on municipalities forced to allocate additional resources for liability coverage, legal defense, and risk mitigation.
- Reduced availability of recreational spaces as municipalities consider closing or limiting access to properties to avoid litigation risks.
- A chilling effect on efforts to expand outdoor recreational opportunities, which are vital for community health and well-being.

Rhode Island has a strong tradition of promoting outdoor recreation, and preserving liability protections for municipalities is essential to continuing this legacy. Rather than weakening these protections, we urge the General Assembly to maintain the current framework that balances public access with responsible municipal governance.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the committee reject House Bill 5905. We appreciate your time and consideration on this important matter, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the General Assembly to find alternative solutions that protect both public access and municipal interests.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or for further discussion.
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Judiciary Committee