

April 2, 2024

Chair Casey and Members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter **in strong support of Bill H7658**, which would prohibit commercial trucks, weighing over 26,000 lbs from traveling on Pleasant St./Route 114 A in East Providence between Pawtucket Avenue and the Massachusetts state line. This is similar to the commercial truck restrictions already in place in Bristol and Warren on Route 114.

My name is Olivia DeManche and I live on this stretch of road with my husband and our 2 children – 7 and 8 years old. We have lived in our house approaching 9 years, and were drawn to this area for its historic district designation (purchasing a 100-year-old home) and family-friendly community.

The less than half mile stretch of road this bill impacts is completely residential, with no continuous sidewalks and currently no crosswalks (although DOT has said we will be getting one sometime this year). This road is in a national historic district with houses along it dating back to the 1700 and 1800s, which are being shaken day and night by tractor trailers passing through the neighborhood. We value and take pride in our homes and are concerned about the potential damages from the constant heavy commercial traffic.

There are dozens of young children that live along, and in the neighborhoods surrounding, this road. There is an elementary and middle school bus stop on this road, right across the street from my house. Many residents and visitors walk this road to visit Hunts Mill and hike or run around Turner Reservoir. I can personally attest to the fear of walking my children across this road daily to their school bus stop, or along it with large trucks barreling down it.

This fall and winter, my neighbors and I collected a petition signed by over 150 members of our community in support of the truck restrictions outlined in this bill. The community support, the safety considerations outlined above, and the easily accessible alternate commercial routes are clear reasons why this bill should move forward.

As many of you may know, this same bill was introduced last year and passed both the house and senate, before being, in my opinion, unnecessarily vetoed by the Governor in late June.

Let me be clear - reasonable access would NOT be denied by limiting heavy commercial vehicles on this stretch of 114A in East Providence. There are easily accessible alternate commercial routes that large trucks can take on national highway system roads (Route 44 -Taunton Ave - and Route 114 – Pawtucket Ave - for example) that would add just a mile onto their route.

Furthermore, because this stretch of road is NOT within one mile of the national network (that is I-195 and I-95), no specific safety concern must be identified to justify restricting truck access, just a general assumption of safety considerations; this is directly according to federal regulations (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-G/part-658/section-658.19>) and the opposite of what Governor McKee implied in his veto.

Let me repeat, 114A in East Providence goes through a completely residential historic district. There are no continuous sidewalks, and currently no crosswalks. There are alternate commercial routes that add minimal distance to truck traffic. The safety study the state conducted after this veto took NONE of this into consideration. And the study itself, which was based on Massachusetts guidelines, because Rhode Island doesn't even have our own process for this, contradicted what we are already practicing in our state. And was the safety study even necessary? I believe federal regulations say no, because 114A in East Providence is not within one mile of the National Network.

Additionally, 53' semi-trailers are already prohibited from traveling on this stretch of road, and we are working with the East Providence police to enforce this as there are many violators of this law. This bill, if passed into law, is really only restricting a small portion of other heavy commercial trucks - trucks that have no business traveling on residential roads and should stay on nearby commercial roads instead.

I urge this committee to support this bill, and protect the safety of residents and homes in this historic community. Again, we have precedent in our state and have done similar restrictions in Bristol and Warren. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Olivia DeManche

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