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March 10, 2025

House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: Support for House Bill 5704: Strengthening Pesticide Regulations and Rodent Management

Dear Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing,

I strongly support House Bill 5704, which updates Rhode Island's pesticide regulations to improve clarity, protect public health, and promote responsible rodent control. This bill is essential in reducing the harmful effects of anticoagulant rodenticides on wildlife and the environment.

House Bill 5704 refines key pesticide definitions, including those for "first generation anticoagulant rodenticide" and its active ingredients (Chlorophacinone, Diphacinone, and Warfarin) ensuring regulations align with current science. It also modernizes the definition of "Highly toxic pesticide" under federal standards, improving consistency and enforcement. For the past two years, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island has advocated banning anticoagulant rodenticides due to their devastating impact on non-target species, especially raptors such as eagles, hawks, and owls. These poisons have also harmed mammals, reptiles, fish, and even humans, with documented fatalities. Scientific research continues to highlight their widespread danger to ecosystems.

This bill responsibly phases out first-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in retail stores by March 1, 2026, and second-generation products by January 1, 2027, while allowing limited exemptions for public health and agriculture. These steps strike a balance between reducing environmental harm and maintaining necessary pest control measures. Additionally, the "Rodent Integrated Pest Management Pilot Program Act" supports science-based pest control by encouraging municipalities to adopt safer, more effective alternatives. With inspections, tracking, and funding support, this initiative will help communities transition away from harmful rodenticides. The program's sunset provision on October 1, 2028, allows for future evaluation and potential extension.

Passing House Bill 5704 will help protect Rhode Island's residents, pets, and wildlife from the dangers of indiscriminate rodenticide use while promoting sustainable pest management. I urge the committee to support this critical legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Hughes

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