



Audubon Society of Rhode Island

June 10, 2025

Representative Stephen Casey
Chair, House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island strongly urges H-5704 to be brought for a vote in committee this session.

Dear Chair Casey and honorable members of the House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Audubon Society of Rhode Island has made H-5704 our top priority. We've educated and engaged our 17,000 members and supporters, over 50,000 social media followers, roughly 1,500 Rhode Islanders who have signed online petitions and postcards, and the innumerable more who have called, emailed, testified, and volunteered on H-5704. We urge you to bring H-5704 up for a vote in committee; this bill sensibly phases in a ban for anticoagulant rodenticides, a class of rat poisons killing raptors, poisoning children, threatening our water, killing dogs, and making rodent woes worse.

The town of Johnston reports a growing rodent problem, despite the municipal public works department placing over 400 bait boxes containing the types of rat poisons we are asking to be banned in the past year. This does not include boxes put by individual business, homeowners, and pest control companies. When Audubon Society of Rhode Island approached several cities we asked if what they were currently doing was working. The answer was no. Providence Mayor Brett Smiley, the Providence City Council, the City of Cranston, and the City of Warwick want H-5704 passed in its entirety.

These rat poisons have not proven their effectiveness at curbing rat populations over time, but they have proven to kill the predators that have evolved to do so. Rodents who eat the poison bleed out internally over the course of 5-10 days, making themselves easy prey for predators such as raptors. When a bird of prey eats that rodent, they accumulate the poison until they die. Owls, hawks, eagles, and more are a part of the solution. One Eastern Screech Owl can eat up to 1,000 rodents a year, but can die from eating 1-2 rodents who have ingested the poison.

The poison also impacts thousands of people across the United States each year. In 2023, 70% of those who sought treatment were children ages 5 and younger. Treatment can take weeks and in extreme cases, months. These rat poisons have proven to be found polluting our water. They have also been found throughout the ecosystem,

including in deer and fish that are hunted and consumed here in Rhode Island. Pets have also bled out from these poisons. Research shows that a lesser amount of these rat poisons is needed to kill a Beagle than the most common rat in Rhode Island.

Wildlife-safe alternatives exist and they work. California's ban on rodenticides went into effect on January 1st, 2021. After the ban, rodent complaints to cities, towns, and counties steadily decreased. Rodent complaints are now at a ten year low compared to before the ban.

H-5704 begins by supporting municipalities to voluntarily run pilot programs to determine wildlife safe alternative best practices. California only had months to prepare for a ban and still has had successful results. H-5704 phases in a ban, providing support to municipalities and implementing a ban on the use in two and a half years.

H-5704 then phases in a ban on the sale of anticoagulant rodenticides, providing enough time for consumer retail stores to clear their shelves before the sale is restricted. Bills that ban these poisons in other states ban the sale entirely, but by providing the option for these pesticides to still be sold in select locations in Rhode Island, they are still accessible in the case of the ban's exemptions (agriculture, breweries, and in the case of a declared public health emergency).

The full ban, still with exemptions, is phased in on January 1st, 2028. This is the longest lead time in the nation until a ban is implemented after passage in any proposed legislation. H-5704 is intentionally designed to set Rhode Island up for success on all fronts.

While only one individual testified against the bill at the House Municipal Government and Housing committee on this bill, many individuals and organizations either submitted testimony, signed in support, or indicated their support at either the Senate or House sign-up sheets. They include: The RI Farmers' Bureau, Save the Bay, Clean Water Action, the Rhode Island Land Trust Council, The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Council of Rhode Island, Congress of the Birds, and Roots 2 Empower.

There are additional animal welfare groups who have seen the results firsthand of wildlife and pets bleeding out from these over-relied upon, unnecessary, and ineffective poisons. They also submitted testimony.

H-5704 is wanted by Rhode Islanders. We've attached 1009 signatures of those who want you to pass H-5704 to ban the rat poisons. We have over 450 additional unique in person signatures on postcards. Our 17,000 members and supporters are invested; volunteering, sharing information, showing up to hearings, sharing on social media, placing phone calls and emails and all of them want H-5704 brought up for a vote in committee this session.

Rhode Island is poised to lead the nation in both effective rodent control and protection of wildlife. Passing H-5704 would be a major win for the environment and environmentalists throughout the state, region, and nation. Opportunities such as these are rare, and with the Senate passing this bill 35-0 with bipartisan support, Rhode Island

has a great opportunity waiting in the Municipal Government and Housing committee this year.

We urge you to bring H-5704 up for a vote in committee this session.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phoenix Wheeler".

Phoenix Wheeler (they/them)
Director of Advocacy

CC:

Speaker Joseph Shekarchi
Majority Leader Christopher Blazejewski
Representative Rebecca Kislak