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Providence, RI 02903
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March 27, 2025

Chair Stephen Casey
House Committee on Housing & Municipal Government
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill 5960- RI Land Trust Council Supports Qualified Abandonment of Public Town Roads

Dear Chair Casey & Members of the Committee:

The RI Land Trust Council is the coalition of the state's 50+ land trusts— community-based organizations dedicated to protecting open spaces, farms, forests, and watersheds across the state. Land trusts work tirelessly with willing landowners to conserve these areas for the public's benefit, ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to clean air and clean water, green spaces and trails for recreation, and healthy local food. Rhode Island's natural areas play a significant role in enhancing our quality of life, and we support House Bill 5960 because it presents an opportunity to further advance our mission.

The qualified abandonment of town roads would grant public easements over these roads, and make them available for passive recreation. It would relieve municipalities of the responsibility of maintenance of roads they are no longer using, and would also establish a legal pathway for communities to retain public access. This important legislation will enable greater flexibility for cities and towns, while also ensuring permanent access to important natural areas and recreational lands.

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council supports House Bill 5960, and would like to thank Representative Cortvriend for introducing this important legislation. This bill brings a thoughtful and pragmatic approach to balancing the need for passive recreation opportunities and access to natural areas and takes into consideration the needs of cities and towns. We urge the passage of H5960 for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Sayles", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Kate Sayles, Director