

April 22, 2025

Representative Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports House Bill 5967

The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of H5967, which would establish renewable energy development as a by-right use on previously contaminated properties in the State. We are grateful to Representative Speakman for sponsoring it.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Here in Rhode Island, we steward more than 14,000 acres land and protect an additional 35,000 acres with partners. We do much of our work to protect and restore our natural environment in partnership with the Department of Environmental Management, the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, our federal agencies, and local partner organizations.

As Rhode Island's largest land trust, The Nature Conservancy recognizes the need to protect forests and other open spaces that are essential to the state's biodiversity and Rhode Islander's quality of life. We also recognize we cannot fully be in service of our mission to protect the environment without seriously addressing climate change. Responsibly-sited, large-scale renewable energy is a critical component of how Rhode Island will meet both the Act on Climate and 100% Renewable Energy Standard.

House Bill 5967 expands on legislation from the past two years to a) protect the state's core forests, and b) develop renewable energy responsibly and at the scale necessary to achieve our clean energy goals. Both the solar siting legislation from 2023 and the Renewable Ready legislation from 2024 aim to move renewable energy development out of forests, and onto "preferred sites" – areas that have been previously developed or are not suitable for other uses. H-5967 includes language that makes it easier for municipalities to develop contaminated sites for renewable energy development and control over planning and zoning processes. Formerly contaminated sites are ideal for siting clean energy at scale.

The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to provide these comments and supports this legislation.

Sincerely,



Angela Tuoni
Interim Director of Climate & Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island
angela.tuoni@tnc.org