

April 21, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 6069, which proposes an amendment to Section 46-15-2, "Approval of public water supply facilities", of the General Laws in Chapter 46-15 entitled "Water Resources Management" that would exempt both Block Island's New Shoreham Water District, and the town of Jamestown from Rhode Island's statewide water rights law. While I understand the challenges faced by each community in managing water resources, this bill conflates two fundamentally different situations under a single exemption, and as such, it should not be passed in its current form.

Block Island is a unique community situated in the middle of the ocean, without a bridge or infrastructure that could ever realistically support the extension of a waterline from the mainland. Due to this physical isolation, Block Island has had to take significant and proactive measures to secure its own water supply. This includes the installation of a reverse osmosis (RO) system and substantial investments in sustainable water infrastructure. These efforts demonstrate a serious commitment to responsible water management in the face of limited natural resources.

In contrast, Jamestown is not similarly isolated and does have access to resources and potential solutions that have not yet been fully explored or exhausted. Including Jamestown in this bill undermines the efforts that Block Island has already made and sets a concerning precedent for granting blanket exemptions without appropriate consideration of individual circumstances.

Furthermore, Rhode Island's current water law already allows towns to include language in their Water Supply System Management Plan (WSSMP) prohibiting waterline connections or extensions outside their designated district. That mechanism is the appropriate and individualized route for exemptions — one that does not require the passage of a statewide bill.

Grouping Block Island and Jamestown together under House Bill 6069 is like comparing apples to oranges. These communities face vastly different geographic, infrastructural, and environmental realities. It is inappropriate to legislate them under the same standard.

I respectfully ask the committee to consider opposing this bill as written and encourage Block Island to reintroduce a revised version that addresses one its unique situation. Block Island, despite its remote location, has done far more than Jamestown has attempted to do to secure and responsibly manage its water supply. This should be recognized and considered in any policy or exemption that is advanced.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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