



Town of Scituate

Rhode Island

*Scituate Conservation Commission
Scituate Land Trust*



May 5, 2025

RE: House Bill **6283 OPPOSE**

Chair Stephen M. Casey

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing

As chair of the Scituate Land Trust (SLT), I would like to present this written testimony **opposing** the creation of the Burrillville Land Conservancy. The SLT is a municipal land trust and I have served on the board for eight years.

As is the case in Scituate, Burrillville's open space is a valuable asset that will become more precious in the years ahead. They are fortunate to have an independent nonprofit land trust to monitor, care for, and add to this precious asset. To create another land trust to compete with or replace it would be a huge mistake.

While our municipal land trust in Scituate currently successfully collaborates with the Town Council to meet our shared goals of creating, monitoring, and preserving our beautiful open spaces, this hasn't always been the case. Town councils come and go, and when one comes that doesn't appreciate the contributions of the land trust and bends or breaks the rules governing the operation of the land trust, it can significantly impact the conservation goals of the town. We experienced this as a municipal land trust when a hostile town council suspended our funding after we fought their efforts to stack the membership of our land trust and conservation commission contrary to appointment staggering requirements mandated by law. With the state attorney general's help, the land trust eventually prevailed. Creating a municipal land trust doesn't guarantee total control by the town council.

The Town of Burrillville will be better served to keep the current, independent land trust that has more flexibility in such things as seeking outside funding opportunities. Please don't create unnecessary problems by creating a competing land trust.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rob Bower

Chair, Scituate Land Trust