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WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS ASSOCIATION OF RHODE ISLAND D.B.A. WILDLIFE CLINIC OF RHODE ISLAND

Date: February 26, 2024

House Bill 7222
Health and Safety - Pesticide Control
Referred to RI House Municipal Government & Housing
Position: SUPPORT

Bill Title: Creates rodent integrated pest management pilot programs for municipalities that choose to participate. Reports to be approved by the municipality's mayor or administrator and submitted to the department of environmental management.

Submitted by:

Arianna Mouradjian, Chief Operating Officer, Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island

On behalf of the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 7222, which restricts the sale and use of anticoagulant rodenticides and advances integrated pest management as a safer, more effective approach to rodent control.

Every year, the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island treats thousands of injured and ill wild animals from across Rhode Island. We consistently observe a pattern of cases with clinical findings consistent with anticoagulant rodenticide exposure, identified through bloodwork abnormalities, prolonged bleeding, species risk profiles, and exclusion of other likely causes. These compounds are inherently non-selective and do not remain confined to their intended targets, but instead move through the food web, impacting predators and scavengers far beyond the site of use.

Anticoagulant rodenticides cause prolonged bleeding rather than rapid death. Target rodents may survive for days, despite internal hemorrhage, during which time they are more likely to be preyed upon. As a result, wildlife that naturally help regulate rodent populations, including not only birds of prey, but also mammalian carnivores, reptiles and wading birds like Great Blue Herons, are exposed secondarily. This is not an isolated or incidental effect; it is a predictable outcome of how these products function in real-world environments.

As Rhode Island's only wildlife rehabilitation hospital, we approach suspected toxic exposure with clinical rigor and caution. Confirmatory toxicology testing for anticoagulant rodenticides is often prohibitively expensive and not routinely accessible to wildlife clinics. Accordingly, our assessments rely on veterinary standards, including blood clotting evaluation, clinical presentation, differential diagnosis, and documented patterns across species. While we do not overstate individual diagnoses, the recurring constellation of findings we observe aligns closely

with anticoagulant rodenticide toxicosis as described extensively in the veterinary and wildlife toxicology literature.

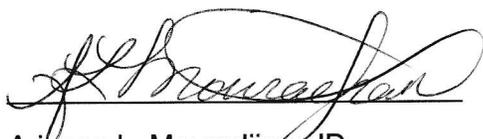
Beyond wildlife impacts, there are public health considerations. Research has shown that rodents exposed to anticoagulant rodenticides are more likely to harbor zoonotic pathogens, including leptospirosis, a disease of significant concern in New England that can cause severe illness or death in humans and domestic animals. Rodents are known vectors for dozens of zoonotic diseases. Continued reliance on methods that may exacerbate disease prevalence, while failing to eliminate rodent populations meaningfully, raises legitimate public health concerns.

It is also important to recognize a structural limitation of the current rodent control market. Anticoagulant rodenticides are widely promoted and used without any requirement that their application achieve a measurable or sustained reduction in rodent populations. This creates a system in which ongoing product use is economically rewarded, even when underlying rodent problems persist, while the environmental, wildlife, and public health costs associated with that continued use are externalized to municipalities, taxpayers, and the public.

House Bill 7222 addresses this gap thoughtfully and responsibly. The bill phases out consumer access to the most harmful rodenticides, preserves narrowly tailored exceptions for true public health emergencies and critical facilities, and, critically, establishes a municipal integrated pest management pilot program that emphasizes prevention, monitoring, and outcome-based evaluation. By requiring documentation, comparison areas, and reporting, the bill promotes accountability and evidence-driven decision-making in rodent control.

From the perspective of those of us who treat the unintended victims of these products, House Bill 7222 reflects a balanced, science-informed approach that protects public health while reducing preventable harm to wildlife and the environment. It recognizes that ecological losses are not abstract, they are early warning signals, and that safer, effective alternatives already exist.

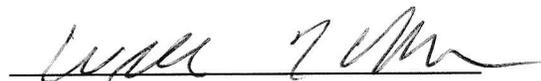
We respectfully urge the Committee to support and advance House Bill 7222.



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