

Dawn Huntley

From: Jill Blanchette <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Tuesday, May 5, 2026 3:13 PM
To: House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Subject: Support for H-8110, S-2734, H-8107, S-2135, H-7776, S-2704, H-8169, S-2903

House Municipal Government and Housing Committee,

Hello,

I am writing to express my strong support for the bills described below. I love Rhode Island's beaches and we need to make sure we don't lose access over time because of erosion, road abandonment, or other changes that limit people's access.

The first bill (2026-H 7776, 2026-S 2704) would require towns to vote on whether to keep a public easement before abandoning them and to preserve historic unpaved roads as "special ways". Under current Rhode Island law, the only option for a municipality that does not wish to maintain or pave a road is to abandon it totally to the abutting private property owners.

The second bill (2026-H 8107, 2026-S 2135) would allow the CRMC to designate historic footpaths as rights of way. Currently a pathway must have been used by carriages or vehicles to qualify as a potential right of way. This bill would repeal that condition, paving the way for the CRMC to protect historic footpaths used for shoreline access through official designation.

The third bill (2026-H 8110, 2026-S 2734) would require landlords to provide tenants with written shoreline access disclosure before the start of tenancy. The disclosure would include the public's rights and privileges to the shore up to 10 feet above the recognizable high tide line, requires the landlord to disclose any known rights of way to the tenant and advise the tenant to contact CRMC to find out if any public rights of way or permits are tied to the property.

The fourth bill (2026-H 8169, 2026-S 2903) would fund technical assistance for towns/cities in RI to plan & prioritize areas for voluntary buyouts and then restore those areas to their natural habitat. In some areas, managed retreat is necessary to sustain shoreline access for the future. As property owners build sea walls or other hard structures in response to erosion, sea

level rise will only continue to shrink the public access area of the beach. Some areas e.g. in Matunuck are already unpassable and/or dangerous at mid-to-high tide.

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