



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 8014 – AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- FARMLAND PRESERVATION ACT

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to offer comments regarding House Bill 8014, which would prohibit municipalities and quasi-municipal entities from assessing certain costs to agricultural operations for water and sewer utility extensions.

The League appreciates the intent of this legislation and strongly recognizes the importance of supporting and preserving Rhode Island's agricultural community. Protecting working farms and reducing financial burdens on agricultural operations are important policy goals that benefit not only the farming community but the state's economy, environment, and local food systems.

At the same time, the League has some concerns with the bill as currently drafted, particularly regarding municipal finance and local flexibility. Water and sewer infrastructure projects often require significant capital investment, and existing assessment and connection fee structures are essential tools for municipalities to fairly allocate costs among properties that benefit from such improvements. Prohibiting assessments for agricultural properties could shift these costs onto municipalities and other ratepayers, which can be challenging, especially in smaller and rural communities.

The League believes that these goals can still be achieved while preserving municipal flexibility. For example, allowing a municipal opt-out or local determination would enable cities and towns to apply the provisions in a way that supports farmers while addressing unique local circumstances. This approach ensures that the intent of protecting agricultural operations is honored in most communities while maintaining fairness and sustainability in municipal infrastructure financing.

The League stands ready to work with the sponsor and stakeholders to refine the legislation so that it both protects agricultural operations and respects the practical and fiscal realities facing municipalities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing