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March 28, 2026

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Marisa Angell Brown

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

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I write in support of House Bill 7218, which would establish the Crook Point Bridge Authority to be responsible for the ownership, preservation, and maintenance of the Crook Point Bascule Bridge.

Originally built in 1908 to carry the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad line, the Crook Point Bascule Bridge has been stuck in the upright position for more than 50 years. Since then, it has become an iconic sculptural element of the Providence and East Providence landscape.

This rolling lift drawbridge was first listed on Providence Preservation Society's Most Endangered Places List in 2020 after the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) announced plans to demolish it in 2019, citing safety concerns. Many local Providence residents and leaders opposed that plan, prompting Mayor Jorge Elorza's administration to launch a design competition in 2020 to rethink its use. Horsley Witten Group & Jonathan Harris were selected as the winners in June 2021. The firm envisioned a gathering space where visitors could view public art installations and commune with nature via a network of walking paths. In their design, they prioritized shoreline restoration and stormwater management to strengthen the Seekonk River ecosystem. They also proposed an affordable housing development on the East Providence side of the river.

Such ambitious, creative thinking is exactly what it takes to turn defunct industrial sites into real assets to the community. Other cities like New York and Chicago have been able to transform derelict railways into urban trails that draw visitors from near and far — why not do the same here in Providence?

Unfortunately, no solid plans for the bridge ever came out of the design competition five years ago, and redevelopment of this structure fell out of public conversation once again — until recently. Mayor Brett Smiley announced in

January 2026 that he'd like to see ownership of the bridge transferred from the state into the hands of a quasi-public authority for redevelopment. PPS supports this effort and listed the Crook Point Bridge on its 2026 Most Endangered Places List again to keep public attention focused on the bridge's future.

PPS believes that a long-term governance structure for the bridge is necessary to support the preservation and future community use of Crook Point Bridge. Through the creation of the Crook Point Bridge Authority, this legislation would allow for the transfer of ownership to the City of Providence, ensuring that the bridge can be maintained in line with community input.

This new start would be a fitting way to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1976 decommissioning of the Crook Point Bascule Bridge.

I thank the sponsor of this bill and urge the committee to vote in favor of House Bill 7218.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marisa Angell Brown".

Marisa Angell Brown, Ph.D.
Executive Director
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