



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 31, 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 8294 – AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- ABANDONED PROPERTY

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns appreciates the dialogue this legislation opens regarding the reuse of abandoned and previously contaminated properties, including the integration of energy storage systems. The bill highlights opportunities for municipalities to address blight, encourage redevelopment, and advance renewable energy infrastructure in a manner consistent with broader state and local objectives. In particular, redeveloping underutilized or environmentally challenged sites can provide economic, environmental, and community benefits that align with municipal priorities.

At the same time, cities and towns have raised questions about the designation of energy storage systems as by-right uses and the potential impacts on local zoning authority, community engagement, and neighborhood considerations. Municipalities remain focused on ensuring that projects align with local industrial and manufacturing zoning standards, structural lot coverage limits, and other land use regulations that reflect local priorities. Maintaining these local controls is essential to ensuring that redevelopment supports the needs of communities and integrates effectively with surrounding land uses.

The League also notes that energy storage systems present unique safety considerations, including potential fire hazards, chemical risks, and the presence of hazardous materials. Municipalities view coordination with local fire departments and emergency responders as a critical component of planning, permitting, and ongoing operations for these facilities. Establishing clear protocols for emergency access, fire suppression, and first responder training is essential to protect both municipal personnel and the surrounding community, while also ensuring the long-term safety and viability of redevelopment projects.

The League looks forward to continued collaboration with the bill's sponsors and stakeholders to clarify processes, maintain appropriate municipal oversight, and ensure that redevelopment of these properties is executed in a manner that maximizes public benefit while addressing local concerns. By fostering communication between state and municipal stakeholders, including emergency services, cities and towns can help ensure that energy storage projects contribute to sustainable redevelopment goals without creating unintended risks or burdens for local communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rossi', written in a cursive style.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing