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Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General

May 21, 2025

The Honorable Evan Shanley, Chairman
House Committee on State Government & Elections
State House, Room 135
Providence, RI 02903

Re: HB 6126 and CRMC Reform

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the House State Government & Elections Committee,

I write today to express concerns about any proposal, including HB 6126, that seeks to reform the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) solely by amending the makeup of the Council.

While I agree the CRMC in its current form is fundamentally flawed, amending the Council in the manner proposed by HB 6126 fails to address the core structural problems within the CRMC. In my Office's experience, and the experience of everyday Rhode Islanders, it is the unique and peculiar structure of the CRMC that has resulted in challenges such as the inability or reluctance to fill open seats, inability to meet a quorum, years-long delays, back-room deals and blatant violations of law. None of these significant problems will be addressed by simply requiring that volunteer Council members have certain professional backgrounds or qualifications.

The state deserves a modern, professional coastal resources management agency with appropriate expertise to fulfill its crucial mission. Accordingly, I encourage this committee to pass HB 5706, submitted at my request and sponsored by Representative Terri Cortvriend, which would provide the comprehensive reform that Rhode Islanders deserve and ensure that our coastal resources are in the hands of qualified, full-time staff of a professional agency.

We have a responsibility to protect our coastal resources – and Hb 5706 is the only proposal before this body that will truly do just that. Regrettably, HB 6126 falls short of addressing the core structural problems at the CRMC. As always, I appreciate the Committee's consideration, and I am available for any further questions the Committee may have.

Sincerely,

Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General