



Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Surfrider Foundation's Rhode Island Chapter, we write in support of H7996.

Rhode Island's coastline is a vital public resource, and protecting it requires a system that is responsive, well-resourced, and capable of enforcing the laws it is charged with upholding. In practice, ongoing challenges with the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) have made this difficult.

For example, our Chapter is currently working on an issue on Tuckerman Avenue in Middletown, where a prompt response to an inquiry submitted on April 11 could have prevented a construction company from destroying part of a designated CRMC right-of-way—violating recently enacted shoreline access protections. As of April 29, no response has been received. This delay has already resulted in the loss of functional public access, making vehicular passage and parking at the site impossible. Situations like this highlight a broader concern: when agencies are under-resourced and unable to respond or enforce in a timely manner, they risk becoming ineffective in practice—a “paper tiger” rather than a regulatory body capable of upholding the law. Similar concerns have been raised in other high-profile cases, further underscoring the need for structural reform.

Additionally, when it comes to something as vital as Rhode Island's coastal protections and management, it is equally important that those empowered by the State to oversee this protection and management are well-versed in relevant educational and professional expertise, not simply politically appointed to a regulatory body like the CRMC.

H7996 offers a path forward by strengthening oversight and aligning coastal management with the resources and enforcement capacity needed to ensure accountability. This is a necessary step to protect Rhode Island's coastal resources and uphold the public's right to access them.

We urge your support for this important legislation.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bo Allen

On behalf of the Surfrider Foundation Rhode Island Chapter