
Written Testimony for S2352

From Elliot B <ekborges401@gmail.com>

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To SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>; Sen. Lauria, Pamela J. <sen-lauria@rilegislature.gov>; Rep. Boylan, Jennifer <rep-boylan@rilegislature.gov>

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To: Chair Sosnowski and the honorable members of the Senate Environmental and Agriculture Committee

cc: Senator Lauia. Representative Boylan

Re: Support for S2352

April 6, 2026

My name is Elliot Borges. I am a high school student with a passion for the outdoors. Hiking is a hobby of mine, whether I am with my family or with my Boy Scout Troop. As a student who hopes to keep enjoying Rhode Island's forests for many years, protecting our ecosystem is very important to me. Therefore, I joined the Barrington Land Conservation Trust Student Stewardship Team in June 2025. Since then, I have personally spent over 50 hours pulling invasive species and removing trash from the BLCT properties. I have firsthand experience with just how challenging it is to attempt to eradicate invasive species and protect our ecosystem.

My first exposure to an invasive species was right in our front yard. We have a maple tree at the edge of our property that produces beautiful red leaves each fall that canopy over the street. When I was about five years old, I looked up and saw several branches dying. When I told my mom, she looked up and saw a vine choking off the branches. I was afraid to touch it. My mom named it "viney vine" and cut it off at the base. We thought the job was done. However, it came right back. For the next three or four years, my mom and I would check for and pull "viney vine" every time there were new sprouts. It took at least three to four years to eradicate just one vine. It took constant vigilance to ensure our beautiful tree would continue to stand strong.

I have spent a lot of time enjoying the Veterans Memorial Park walking trails. However, it is impossible not to notice that vines are destroying the bushes and trees at an alarming rate. Since it took so much effort to save just that one tree, I can't imagine how hard it would be to stop the destruction of the woods enjoyed by so many. The members of the BLCT Student Stewardship team have spent hundreds, maybe thousands of hours pulling invasive species from BLCT properties. It is hard, manual work and often feels like we are just falling further behind.

The only real answer is prevention. We need to stop invasive species from being sold and distributed in Rhode Island. The vine on our property was already there before my parents bought our house. At the time, we didn't know anything about invasive species or how harmful they can be to the environment. Many people probably don't know about the damage these species can cause. Because of that, they might buy them without realizing the negative impact they can have on nature. Banning the sale of these species would help stop people from accidentally harming our local ecosystem. I strongly support the passage of Rhode Island Senate bill S2352. So does my mom.

Respectfully,

Elliot Borges
Barrington, RI