
Written Testimony IN SUPPORT of S2352 for 4/8/26 meeting

From Megan McLarney <meganmclarney@gmail.com>

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To SLegislation <slegislation@rilegislature.gov>

Cc Sen. Bissaillon, Jacob E. <sen-bissaillon@rilegislature.gov>; Sen. Bell, Samuel W. <sen-bell@rilegislature.gov>

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TO: SLegislation@rilegislature.gov

CC: sen-bell@rilegislature.gov
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SUBJECT: Written Testimony IN SUPPORT of S2352 — Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act of 2026

Testimony of Megan McLarney
Providence, Rhode Island
In Support of S2352

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee:

I write in strong support of S2352, the Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act of 2026, and urge its prompt passage.

Rhode Island is currently the only New England state, and one of just five states nationwide, that fails to regulate the propagation, import, and sale of invasive terrestrial plants. This regulatory gap imposes significant and ongoing financial liability on the State, its municipalities, and its taxpayers.

The economic case is straightforward. Ninety-seven percent of Rhode Island's key habitats are threatened by invasive species.¹ State agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners already spend hundreds of thousands of dollars annually attempting to manage species that continue to be actively sold through the commercial nursery trade. Peer-reviewed research consistently demonstrates that 60–85% of invasive plants were intentionally introduced through sale and planting.² Rhode Island is, in effect, permitting the commercial distribution of the very species it then pays to eradicate.

The resulting harm extends across sectors: degradation of stormwater infrastructure, agricultural crop loss, diminished tourism and recreational revenue, and contamination of aquatic habitats affecting the commercial fishing industry.

This bill imposes no burden on existing private plantings. It provides reasonable phase-out periods for nursery stock. It leverages existing DEM inspection and licensing infrastructure. And it aligns Rhode Island with the regulatory standards already adopted by New Hampshire (1997), Connecticut (2004), Massachusetts (2006), Vermont (2012), and Maine (2017).

Prevention is the most cost-effective management strategy available. Every year this legislation remains unenacted, the State's remediation costs increase while the window for feasible eradication narrows.

I respectfully urge the Committee to report this bill favorably and the General Assembly to pass it without delay.

Respectfully submitted,
Megan McLarney
Providence, RI 02906

¹ RI Wildlife Action Plan; Rhode Island Invasive Species Council data.

² Beaury, E. M., Patrick, M., & Bradley, B. A. (2021). Invaders for sale: The ongoing spread of invasive species by the plant trade industry. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*.

Best,
Megan

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