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April 8, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Senate Environment & Agriculture Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
State House
Providence, RI

RE: Opposition to Senate Bill S2803 – RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the New England Water Works Association (NEWWA), the regional, independent, member-driven association that serves the drinking water profession across the six New England states, we respectfully submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill S2803.

S2803 would extend the required inspection and testing interval for backflow prevention devices from annually to once every ten (10) years. While we understand the intent to reduce administrative burden, this change poses a significant risk to public health and drinking water safety.

Backflow prevention devices serve as a critical line of defense against contamination entering the public water supply through cross-connections. These devices are mechanical in nature and subject to wear, failure, and tampering. Annual testing is an established industry best practice that ensures devices are functioning properly and that potential hazards are identified and corrected promptly. Extending the inspection cycle to 10 years would dramatically increase the likelihood that failures go undetected, creating unacceptable risks of contamination events.

Drinking water systems operate under a preventative public health framework. Reducing oversight of backflow prevention undermines this approach and shifts the burden from prevention to response—potentially exposing communities to harmful contaminants before issues are identified.

For these reasons, NEWWA strongly urges the Committee to oppose S2803 and maintain existing inspection frequencies that protect public health and the integrity of drinking water systems.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further—we may be contacted at 508-893-7979 ext. 243 or kking@newwa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kirsten King'.

Kirsten King, CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Boisvert'.

John Boisvert, President