



April 28, 2026

Chairman Louis DiPalma

RE: STRONG SUPPORT for Senate Bill 3231 – Enhancing the 2024 Green Bond

Dear Chairman DiPalma:

On behalf of the Westerly Land Trust (WLT), I am writing to express our **strong support for Senate Bill 3231**. While we applaud the inclusion of a Green Bond in the current budget, the absence of robust conservation funding in the initial draft threatens our ability to conserve lands important to Rhode Island's heritage. To ensure a resilient future for Rhode Island, we urge the Committee to add **\$17.5 million** to the bond for critical land and water protections.

This investment is not just an environmental priority; it is an economic necessity. **Every \$1.00 of state funding spent on conservation leverages \$1.70 in federal and philanthropic matches.** Westerly Land Trust has harnessed funding through the Local Open Space Program, which has inspired matching gifts from private funders, and has allowed us to move swiftly and thoughtfully to protect land. S3231 provides the necessary resources to restore our primary conservation engines:

- **\$2M for Farmland Preservation:** Protects the farmlands that support a \$250 million direct-revenue sector in a state with the most expensive farmland in the nation.
- **\$2M for Local Open Space Grants:** Re-funds the critical 50% match that municipalities and land trusts like WLT rely on for local conservation. Current funds are entirely spent down.

Conserved lands are the "natural infrastructure" of Rhode Island. They filter our drinking water, mitigate flooding, cool our cities by absorbing sunlight, and support our vital tourism economy. Recent polling shows 85% of Rhode Islanders believe we can—and must—support both land conservation and affordable housing simultaneously.

If the Green Bond proceeds without these additions, our efforts to protect the character and climate-resilience of Westerly and the entire state will become significantly more difficult. Thank you, Senator DiPalma, for your efforts to "Make the Green Bond Greener" and ensure these programs remain viable for the health and prosperity of all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this vital request.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fusco
Executive Director

