

Winter Pacheco-Riley  
Bristol Resident in support of Senate Bill 3231

Good afternoon Chairman Louis DiPalma,

My name is Winter Pacheco-Riley and I am a lifelong resident of Bristol, Rhode Island. I urge you to bring attention to the additional funding needed in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond, specifically, \$10 million towards land and water conservation programs. In this letter, I hope to display my support for this additional funding and give my perspective on why it is so crucial.

As an animal sciences major and wildlife conservation biology minor, this topic is very important to me. I have volunteered for Audubon Society of Rhode Island for several years now and have witnessed firsthand the amazing work that they do. Without the proper funding, it would make work harder for all the volunteers and staff. Currently, I am volunteering for the Audubon Society on the Bluebird Monitoring Project. My job is to monitor and support bird populations that have seen historical declines, such as the Eastern Bluebird. Caratunk Wildlife Refuge, the site I monitor, is home to these birds and other species whose continued survival is dependent on us.

Bristol alone is home to several conservation and refuge areas that are vital to the local wildlife. Residents of this small town favor the walking trails, parks and natural spaces that make Bristol what it is. Each summer, the Bristol Fourth of July brings in upwards of over 200,000 people and makes Bristol about \$1 million dollars. These visitors want to see our parks and farms continue to be in good health, which can be ensured by the additional funding towards land and water conservation programs. Speaking of finances, for every \$1 in conservation money invested by the state of Rhode Island, our community raises about \$1.70 in matching funds.

I urge you to include this additional funding to conserve our local forests, spaces and parks throughout Rhode Island. This includes \$3 million for the State Open Space Program to conserve lands of statewide interest; \$2 million in Local Open Space Matching Grants to municipalities, land-trusts and non-profit organizations and \$2 million for farmland preservation to keep our local farms afloat.

Thank you to all relevant parties for hearing my concerns and perspective on the additional funding towards the Green Bond Amendment. In conclusion, I ask the committee to include \$10 million in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond to go towards local conservation programs.