

April 9, 2026

The Honorable Jacob Bissaillon, Chair
Senate Housing and Municipal Government
Rhode Island Senate
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: SENATE BILL 2800 – AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- ABANDONED PROPERTY

Dear Chair Bissaillon and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we appreciate the dialogue that Senate Bill 2800 opens regarding the reuse of abandoned and previously contaminated properties, including the integration of energy storage systems. This legislation highlights meaningful opportunities for municipalities to address blight, encourage redevelopment, and advance renewable energy infrastructure in alignment with broader state and local goals. Redeveloping underutilized or environmentally challenged sites can deliver important economic, environmental, and community benefits that closely reflect municipal priorities.

At the same time, cities and towns have raised important questions regarding the designation of energy storage systems as by-right uses and the potential implications for local zoning authority, community engagement, and neighborhood compatibility. Municipalities remain committed to ensuring that such projects are consistent with local industrial and manufacturing zoning standards, structural lot coverage limitations, and other land use regulations that reflect community-specific priorities. Preserving these local controls is essential to ensuring that redevelopment efforts are thoughtfully planned and appropriately integrated into surrounding areas.

The League also notes that energy storage systems present unique safety considerations, including potential fire hazards, chemical risks, and the handling of hazardous materials. Close coordination with local fire departments and emergency responders is critical throughout the planning, permitting, and operational phases of these facilities. Establishing clear protocols for emergency access, fire suppression, and first responder training will help safeguard municipal personnel and residents while supporting the long-term success and safety of redevelopment initiatives.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the bill's sponsors and stakeholders to further clarify processes, preserve appropriate municipal oversight, and ensure that redevelopment of these properties maximizes public benefit while addressing local concerns. Through strong communication and coordination between state and municipal partners, including emergency services, cities and towns can help ensure that energy storage projects contribute to sustainable redevelopment goals without creating unintended risks or burdens for local communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.R.R.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of Senate Housing and Municipal Government