

April 9, 2026

Senator Jacob Bissaillon  
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing & Municipal Government  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02908

**Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports Senate Bill 2903 on Residential and Commercial Property Acquisition Act**

Dear Chairman Bissaillon,

The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2903 and is grateful to Senator Gu for her leadership in sponsoring it.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Here in Rhode Island, we steward more than 14,000 acres land and protect an additional 35,000 acres with partners. We do much of our work to protect and restore our natural environment in partnership with the Department of Environmental Management, the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, our federal agencies, and local partner organizations.

Since 2019, we have partnered with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank to administer the Municipal Resilience Program (MRP). This program empowers municipalities to identify their specific challenges and opportunities in becoming more resilient to the impacts of climate change. To date, all 39 RI municipalities have participated in the program, where they engage in a planning effort and a municipally centered workshop focused on their vulnerabilities and potential actions related to climate resilience.

Unsurprisingly, our coastal communities were the first to sign up for the program in its earliest years – as they are already seeing the impacts of climate change in more frequent rain, flooding, sea level rise, and other effects that impact residents, visitors, and businesses. The effects of climate change are here and will only increase in severity – and are especially being felt on our coasts. For example, over the past 50 years, we've seen the surface water temperature of Narragansett Bay increase by nearly 3 degrees F. Intense rainfall events have increased by over 70% in the last 70 years – sea level has risen at the Newport Tide Gauge by more than 10 inches since 1930. According to NOAA, this could be more than a foot by 2030.

The Residential and Commercial Property Acquisition Program Act is a practical step towards keeping municipalities and residents of Rhode Island safe from the impacts of climate change.

The Act calls for a voluntary buy out program through careful planning processes and funding allocations. Much of the groundwork has been laid for this type of program via the 39 Municipal Resilience Program Plans, Resilient Rhody Plan, and capacity building with the Regional Resilience Coordinators placed at RIDEM.

In Rhode Island, we have already seen creative solutions to rising sea levels and storm surges along the coast. In Barrington, Walker Farm had critical flooding issues due to sea level rise and storm surges. Through the Municipal Resilience Program, the town replaced infrastructure along flood-prone areas and returned a piece of the coast to a vegetated area that floods during storm events – working with nature and not against it. This is an example of how coastal areas can adapt to climate change and how thoughtful planning can make sure infrastructure and people are out of harms way.



*Walker Farm, Barrington RI*

Climate resilience is a complicated issue that requires careful planning and deep collaboration. We are confident that Rhode Island will have a future where people and nature thrive, and we believe this bill helps ensure we get there.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. The Nature Conservancy is happy to be a thought partner in this work and available to answer questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Tuoni'.

Angela Tuoni  
Director of Climate and Government Relations  
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island  
[angela.tuoni@tnc.org](mailto:angela.tuoni@tnc.org)