



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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April 2, 2024

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman
House Committee on Corporations
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7713 An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Electric Bicycles

Dear Chairman Solomon,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7713, which was introduced on DEM's behalf, and would modernize Rhode Island's treatment of electric bicycles (e-bikes) in state law. DEM supports this legislation.

The amendments offered in H 7713 aim to balance the increased popularity of e-bikes among the public with the need to ensure public safety on state bike paths and at other DEM-managed properties. While usage of e-bikes has grown significantly over the past several years, they remain illegal to operate on state bike paths. This outright prohibition is inconsistent with other established state policy, such as the Erika Niedowski Memorial Electric Bicycle Rebate Program administered by the Office of Energy Resources, and inhibits even more widespread adoption of e-bikes as a transportation option.

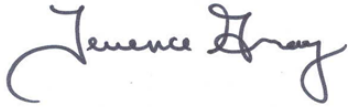
H 7713 would:

- Add definitions for the three classes of e-bikes which are consistent with national standards;
- Allow Class 1 e-bikes, defined as those with an electric motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches 20 miles per hour, to use state bike paths;
- Empowers DEM to determine the allowable use of e-bikes at DEM-managed properties;
- Extends a current requirement that children aged 15 or younger wear a helmet to include when riding an e-bike.

Taken together, these changes will have the effect of expanding the legal use of e-bikes in Rhode Island while ensuring that appropriate safety protections are in effect. It is DEM's intention to determine on a case-by-case basis which properties will allow e-bike usage and which classes of e-bikes will be allowed.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of Legislative Affairs, at ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Corporations
The Honorable Jennifer Boylan
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director