

## **Testimony in support of H7022: Act on Coasts—Coastal Resiliency**

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: March 21, 2024

To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

We are living in the Ocean State, and with rising sea levels and flooding steadily increasing to the point where major roads become frequently impassable and oceanfront properties regularly flood, we begin to realize that human-made climate change turns our beautiful shoreline into a liability. Coastal and inland flooding, higher waters and higher wind speeds, more often than we were used to, will become the new normal.

Because climate change, in our lifetimes, will not be reversible but get worse, it is imperative to improve resiliency and to take measures to minimize flood and storm damage. This will be done most effectively using a centralized approach, by coordinating resilience-related efforts at *the state level*, considering national and international best-practices, and proposing solutions to residents and businesses, preparing them to plan, mitigate, and adapt to the anticipated impacts.

I support H7022, because it establishes the leadership for resilience at the state level:

- It charges the Rhode Island chief resilience officer, and a resiliency office within the department of environmental management with the creation, maintenance and updating of the state's resiliency and community recovery program,
- creates a statewide climate change resilience strategy, and
- establishes an advisory board on resilience for ocean and riverine coasts.

As vice chair of the Town of Barrington Resilience and Energy Committee, I'm very familiar with what can be done at the local level, community by community. We have accomplished a lot already and I'm proud of our work, but I'm also convinced that—while the implementation ultimately happens at the local level—coordination and leadership at the state level have more leverage and are a more effective approach to setting uniform policy, proposing, leading, and coordinating statewide implementation.

Please bring the bill to a vote, in 2024. The waters are rising, and we can't wait longer to take coordinated resiliency action across the state. Every dollar invested now will save ten dollars in loss and damages later.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Spears for introducing this important bill.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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