



April 12, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett  
Chairman House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith St  
Providence RI, 02903

RE: Resolution: 7022 An Act Relating To Waters And Navigation -- Act On Coasts - Coastal Resiliency

Dear Chairman Bennett and Honorable Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am writing to strongly advocate for the passage of House Bill 7022, which is crucial for enhancing the resilience and preparedness of Rhode Island's cities and towns in the face of increasing natural disasters and climate change impacts.

The recent series of flooding events and coastal storms across Rhode Island highlight the urgent need for strategic state-level collaboration with municipalities and other entities to address our vulnerabilities and build resilience. House Bill 7022, by establishing a dedicated Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) and a resiliency office within the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), represents a proactive and necessary step towards building a more resilient state.

We encourage DEM to provide the bill's sponsor with any technical amendments they may have. This collaborative approach will ensure that the legislation is finely tuned to meet the specific needs and concerns of all stakeholders involved, thereby enhancing its effectiveness in assisting all Rhode Island communities.

Cities and towns across Rhode Island are grappling with the immediate and long-term effects of climate change, from rising sea levels to more frequent and intense weather events. By centralizing resiliency efforts under the oversight of the CRO, this bill will facilitate coordinated action to address the specific vulnerabilities and challenges faced by each community.

Furthermore, the creation of a statewide climate change resilience strategy and the formation of a fourteen-member advisory board on resilience for ocean and riverine coasts will provide critical guidance and resources to support local initiatives. This collaborative approach is essential for developing tailored solutions that strengthen infrastructure, protect natural resources, and safeguard the well-being of residents.

I urge you to support House Bill 7022, recognizing its significance in fostering resilience at the state and local levels. The establishment of a robust resiliency program will empower Rhode Island's cities and towns to better adapt to evolving environmental conditions and mitigate the impacts of future disasters.

Thank you for considering the importance of this legislation for the communities we serve. Together, we can take proactive measures to build a more resilient Rhode Island for generations to come.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely, S

Ernie Almonte  
Executive Director

Cc: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Representative Tina L. Spears  
David Bodah, Associate Director