

April 4, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett  
Chairman, House Environment & Natural Resources Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

**RE: H-7728 – Relating to Health & Safety – Comprehensive Fire Safety Act**

Dear Chairman Bennett:

On behalf of Rhode Island Energy, I write in **opposition** to H-7728 as drafted. Although we believe this legislation to be well intentioned, its broad application and limited definition raise several concerns.

As drafted, this newly proposed mandate would apply to *any* entity that owns 500 acres or more of land in Rhode Island. This language is quite vague. For instance, it is unclear which public and/or private property owners are intended to be captured by the phrase “entity;” whether the 500-acre standard is cumulative; and whether the standard applies only to forested land or is broader in scope. H-7728 should provide greater specificity as to which property owners would be required to comply with this law and under what conditions. Also, the term “forest plan with a fire mitigation component” is overly broad and without any defined minimal or preferred content requirements. Finally, the bill requires that the “forest plan” be submitted to and approved by local fire departments and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). However, it does not provide any standard of review or rulemaking that might ultimately govern such a review process.

Although Rhode Island Energy cannot support this bill as drafted, we appreciate the importance of forest fire mitigation efforts to securing the safety and wellbeing of Rhode Islanders and our shared economy. It is a matter that our company and industry are taking seriously, too. For those reasons, Rhode Island Energy welcomes the opportunity to work with the bill sponsor and Committee to ensure this legislation advances its intended purpose without casting too wide a net or creating overly burdensome compliance requirements on property owners across the Ocean State.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,



Nicholas S. Ucci  
Director of Government Affairs

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Environment & Natural Resources Committee  
Representative Megan Cotter, Lead Sponsor