

Testimony in support of H. B. 5099: Construction and Maintenance of State Roads

Date of Hearing: February 6, 2025

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

I am writing in support of HB 5099, which would use areas within limits of the 70 DOT-maintained roads and highways for growing native and pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, and plants.

This bill will help create new habitat for pollinators, helping them to survive. This would provide food security for us, as pollinators are the basis for nearly our entire food supply.

While there are private efforts to support pollinators—through voluntary participation in popular programs as the Pollinator Pathway and Homegrown National Park, which I am a part of—making wise use of the extensive areas maintained by the DOT would greatly enhance the efficacy of private efforts and contribute to Rhode Island’s biodiversity, pollinator health and agricultural sector.

My one recommendation would be to change the language to create an obligation for the DOT to plant pollinator-friendly plants. I recommend adding a requirement that the DOT reports annually the surface area and locations that were planted with native and pollinator-friendly plants. Ideally, there should be language to state that the intent of the bill is to maximize native and pollinator-friendly plantings.

Since the bill was held and not voted on in 2023 and 2024, I urge you to seize the day and bring the bill to a vote on the House floor in 2025.

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

Sincerely,
Gillian Kiley
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