



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

April 9, 2025

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

RE: H 6108 An Act Relating to Agriculture and Forestry – Right to Farm

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 6108, which is intended to promote the ownership of backyard chickens. DEM supports this legislation with recommended amendments.


The ownership of backyard chickens is currently regulated at the local level with varying ordinances in place in communities across the state. H 6108 would allow the ownership of backyard chickens statewide and would set minimum regulatory requirements that municipalities would be able to tighten at their discretion. The bill would prohibit ownership of roosters, regulate the number of hens allowed based on total lot area and not exceed ten hens, and set standards for the enclosure that the chickens are kept in.

DEM has two technical comments related to the language of this legislation. First, we recommend that the language in subsection (a) of the bill be amended to clarify that its provisions apply only to the keeping of domestic chickens and that it is not intended to prohibit or otherwise limit the commercial slaughter or sale of any chickens where otherwise allowed. Second, we recommend that the preemption language found in subsection (m) of the bill be amended to more clearly state that ownership of backyard chickens is allowed statewide, but that municipalities retain the ability to more stringently regulate the practice than the bill provides.

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 dark ink, appearing to read "Terrence Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Terrence" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Gray".

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director