



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street,
Providence, RI 02908

Office: 401.222.2771
Fax: 401.222.6802

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 8030 An Act Relating to Parks and Recreational Areas – General Provisions

Dear Chairman Abney,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 8030, which would allow individuals to obtain a disability pass for DEM properties based on a determination by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services that the individual is disabled for purposes of Medicaid eligibility. DEM fully supports the intent of this legislation but recommends that the language be amended to clarify that the new provision applies only to individuals aged 19 years or younger.

Under R.I. Gen. Laws § 32-1-17, individuals with disabilities are exempted from any fees for parking, admittance, or other user fees for playing golf at state recreational facilities. The law also specifies that a person with a disability is one who receives social security disability benefits; supplemental security income benefits; or veterans benefits and who shall be determined under applicable federal law to be one hundred percent disabled through a service-connected disability. While this system generally works well, in DEM's experience it has been extremely difficult for younger individuals to obtain the documentation needed to receive a disability pass. This legislation, along with DEM's proposed amendment, would provide a pathway for families with children who are disabled to obtain the benefit which the law already intends for them to receive.

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,

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Tina Spears
Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director