

## Roberta DiMezza

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**From:** Susan Cornacchia <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024 2:23 PM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** Support Shoreline Access Bills H-7645/S-2641, H-7750/S-2634, H-7376/S-2185

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RI House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support this package of shoreline access bills.

I appreciate and trust the ongoing efforts of the bill sponsors, and their determination to preserve and protect the public's shoreline access for future generations. Each bill addresses concerns that were raised during the prior legislative Study Commission on Lateral Shoreline Access -- namely, the ability to REACH the shoreline and exercise our centuries-old constitutional privileges along the shore.

S2185/H7376

Property owners or prospective owners need to be properly INFORMED of the public's shoreline rights, as well as any ROWs or access stipulations that impact their expectations or experience as coastal property owners. Realtors and sellers continue to advertise "private beaches," luring potential buyers into paying inflated prices and having visions of a fully exclusive beach. Realtors have no incentive to do otherwise, without legislation such as this. These same property owners are likely to come into conflict with the public when their expectations of a fully exclusive beach are not realized. The unqualified use of the term "private beach" is problematic wherever the public trust portion of that beach is subject to constitutionally protected use by the public.

S-2641/H-7645

Erosion and other factors will make infeasible the continuing maintenance of many public roads or highways in coastal danger zones. Instances are already anticipated wherever coastal resilience is being discussed. Road abandonments along the shore have resulted in extinguishment of traditional ways to the shore, or even to other ROWs that lead to the shore. Such abandonments are viewed by abutters as the ultimate real estate jackpot, especially when such roads provide the only access to entire stretches of barrier beach or peninsulas.

Consider the road abandonments of dedicated highways over decades and the resulting loss of public access. In Narragansett Pier, highway abandonments resulted in permanent extinguishment of multiple ways to the shore. Today, seawalls of private property are blocking the only remaining lateral access which leads to the Narrow River mouth. Consider the roads along Weekapaug Beach, Green Hill Beach, Charlestown Beach. Abutters have huge financial incentives to extinguish the public's ability to reach the shore using road abandonment as a strategy. Towns must have options to retain the public easements over any roads that provide shoreline access.

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