

Dear House Municipal Government and Housing Committee Members,

Please accept this email as a formal communication of my support for Bill 2024-H 7060, introduced by Representatives Edwards, Kennedy, Bennett, Cortvriend and Abney.

My family owns the property immediately south of the Seapowet Bridge in Tiverton, RI and directly abutting the Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Sapowet Cove and the Sapowet Beach.

We are now six generations who have enjoyed and respected this most amazing space for many recreational activities such as boating, swimming, paddle-boarding, wading, walking the beach, clamming and fishing. This is an area that offers so much to so many, and in which I am deeply familiar and imbedded. It has been preserved and protected, for ~75 years when the Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area was established. With the federal funding that has been received in that time (over \$2 Million), hundreds of acres of land acquisitions have been made and improvements and preservations completed to ensure the protection and sustainability of the habitat for fishing, hunting, recreational and scenic use – not only for a point in time, but forever.

This space is one of the state's most notable, and the waters surrounding it are designated as Natural Heritage Areas. Unfortunately, time has brought on an ever-increasing threat for commercial development, and it has brought on the dire need for Bill 2024-H 7060 to be presented and approved. This bill will ensure that the Rhode Island Public Trust Doctrine will be upheld for the reason it was created. There is an already-established right for the public's use here that has been in place in the State of Rhode Island, long before any proposed commercial enterprise. It's critical that we don't lose the ability to uphold that, and to prohibit any form of commercial activity that will inevitably interfere with the recreational uses that exist today, and the eventual harming of the habitat.

If you aren't familiar, you should know that this is an area that is enjoyed and appreciated by not only Rhode Islanders from all across the state, but by many other communities in our surrounding states. We have spent many, many summers watching families enjoy this free area and everything it has to offer. These are members of the public who may not have a voice, as we don't know who they all are. Our elected officials and state and municipal leaders are their voice.

I believe Bill 2024-H 7060 will have a meaningful impact and is a positive and necessary step toward resolving the harmful outcome that commercial activity will bring to this protected space. As is evidenced by the many letters you will receive in support of this bill, and in the historical, documented activity and investments that have been made to preserve and protect this space; there is only one conclusion that should be clear – it is to approve the solution that Bill 2024-H 7060 offers, to significantly safeguard the existing uses protected by the RI Public

Trust Doctrine, and defend against the direct conflicts and hazards that commercial activity will create.

I would go as far to say that not only should we protect the area to the south of the Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area, but also to the north where these recreational uses and activities also occur. There is an important and necessary place for growth in commercial development and the much-needed economic benefit that derives from that in the state of Rhode Island. However, the Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area and surrounding waters should not be considered as part of that place.

Thank you for your consideration in approving this important legislation.

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