

Hello,

Below is my general support and several concerns for H7985 being heard this evening, 3/12/2024.

Thanks Kindly,
Jessica Cigna

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support and Concerns for H7985 - RIGIS

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Cigna. I sit on the RIGIS Executive Committee and while I do not represent the entire committee nor my sponsor agency, I write this letter in general support of the state organizing the various land-use datasets into a comprehensive geospatial tool to be used by state government and by public and private entities. I applaud the attention to GIS in RI. A parcel mapper, similar to that of MASS GIS, has been a goal of the RI GIS community for some time.

<https://massgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/OnePane/basicviewer/index.html?appid=47689963e7bb4007961676ad9fc56ae9>

My concerns are the following:

- On page 8 line 23 “oversight responsibilities” are struck from the original law. I ask that this language strike be removed from any Sub A and that oversight responsibilities remain with the RIGIS Executive Committee. These oversight functions are important to help the Executive Committee in its work to advise on various state GIS and other functions, like parcel standards, for example.
 - https://data.rigis.org/assets/docs/2016/RI_Standards_for_Digital_Parcels_v2.pdf
 - <https://info.rigis.org/pages/documents-and-standards>
- I ask that this bill and the implications it has for GIS in RI be given a legislative study commission so that important decisions can be determined, such as how will it be built - both from a funding perspective (upfront and maintenance costs) and a workflow process; where will this tool be housed within state government and how will it be maintained; how the various levels of government agencies will share this data back and forth over time; and how to keep the data current across many different data owners.
 - It is my hope that this potential study commission could also investigate the necessity for a State Geographic Information Officer (GIO) and a state GIS-Office. GIO’s and Statewide GIS offices’ help other states create a mission and vision for GIS across state entities and help guide the important work of geospatial tools.
 - <https://nsgic.org/about-us/states/>
- I am concerned about the January 1, 2026 deadline to have the tool completed. I do believe that it may be possible to have a very basic, not stitched together, set of files organized into one dataset by that date. However, that would just be the beginning of the work to create a

comprehensive tool that would be of use to the state and others. RI could not build a tool like the MASS GIS parcel mapper above in 1.5 years. It will take time and resources to build a comprehensive tool like above and plan for its growth and maintenance.

- For example: Nearly each municipality manages its own GIS shapefile and the underlying data sources for its parcels. These were all built by various different entities at different times. Stitching together these files will take effort of each municipality to work with its neighboring municipalities to determine boundaries and where the lines fall. This may require reviews from surveyors. Having a singular authoritative data source and methods for its maintenance will take much longer than the January 1, 2026 deadline.

Thank you for considering the support of GIS in Rhode Island. I am encouraged by the attention to these important tools and I hope that you will consider my expressed concerns.

Respectfully,

Jessica Cigna