



The Honorable House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing

March 19, 2024

H 7699 Rhode Island Housing and Conservation Trust Fund Act

Sponsors: Reps. Speakman, Carson, Cotter, McGaw, Giraldo and Pottery

Testimony in Support

Tophers Hamblett, Executive Director

Save The Bay's mission is to protect and improve Narragansett Bay. Our vision is a fully swimmable, fishable, healthy Narragansett Bay accessible to all. We are in full support of the amendments to the Rhode Island Housing and Conservation Trust Fund Act of 1990 and applaud Representative Speakman and her co-sponsors for introducing H 7699.

H 7699 furthers two critical state goals simultaneously: (1) preserving open space for recreational activity, important wildlife habitat, farmland and natural resources projects and (2) creating low- and moderate-income housing, which are in such short supply in our state. These two goals are compatible, and complementary, because they aim to improve the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders.

The amendments to existing move Rhode Islander closer to achieving those goals by:

- designating a special account to be distributed by the RI Infrastructure Bank and administered by the Housing and Conservation Board.
- updating the language and expand the membership of the board that will review projects to include a more diverse and representative membership.
- allocating the funds to be split between housing and conservation projects while reserving 30% of the total amount to be used for either type of project prioritizing those that fulfill both housing and conservation goals.

I serve on the House of Representatives' Land Use Commission, and believe that H 7699, and the law it seeks to amend, reflect the kind of holistic planning that is needed in Rhode Island.

Save The Bay respectfully encourages passage of H 7699.