



## Environment Council of Rhode Island

**From Peter Trafton of Providence, on behalf of the Environment Council of RI  
Testimony in support of HR 5732, House Committee on State Govt.4.3.2025**

Dear Chair Shanley and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, I write with our strongest support for HR 5732 by Chair Bennett – The RI Green Amendment.

We respectfully urge the General Assembly to endorse this Amendment to our state's Constitution in the current session and submit it to popular vote in the next general election, November 2026.

If passed, the Amendment would create a constitutional mandate for all Rhode Islanders' environmental rights. It would specify the state's fiduciary responsibility as a trustee of all public natural resources and would require fair and just fulfillment of environmental protections.

### **The RI Green Amendment.**

*All people in the State of Rhode Island (The Ocean State) have an inherent, inalienable, indefeasible, and self-executing right to clean air, clean water, healthy and uncontaminated soil, a life-supporting climate, and the preservation of the environment's natural, scenic, and recreational values. The state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of Rhode Island, and shall conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including both present and future generations. The state shall not infringe upon these rights and shall protect these rights and Rhode Island's natural resources equitably for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomics.*

If passed, the Amendment would create a constitutional mandate for all Rhode Islanders' environmental rights. It would specify the state's fiduciary responsibility as a trustee of all public natural resources and would require fair and just fulfillment of environmental protections.

The Amendment would be placed in Article 1, The Declaration of Certain Constitutional Rights and Principles.

While Section 17, Article 1, does provide *some* environmental rights and protections, more than many other states, we believe that the Green Amendment is clearer and more specific. And it applies for all people and all generations into the future.

Green Amendments, like the proposed, have become law in Pennsylvania, Montana, and New York. In Montana, it led to the state Supreme Court's ruling in favor of the Our Children's Trust case, Held v. Montana, against that state's support for fossil fuel industries.

RI is the 16<sup>th</sup> state to file legislation to establish a green amendment. The national movement, **Green Amendments for the Generations**, was founded by Maya Van Rossum, law professor and Delaware River Keeper, to address the limited constitutional support for environmental

protection in the vast majority of American states. We are grateful that she is working with local Green Amendment supporters.

Rhode Island's Green Amendment was brought to our attention by the Green Team of Peace Dale Congregational Church. They recognize its benefits and strive for its passage. The Environment Council strongly favors passage of the Green Amendment Resolution, as written, to strengthen constitutional environmental rights perpetually for all Rhode Islanders and to specify the government's fiduciary duty as a trustee of public natural resources.

We urge the Committee to pass resolution 5732 and move it to House consideration.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PG Trafton". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the "P" and "G" being particularly prominent.

Peter Trafton, MD

Co-VP of Policy, Environment Council of Rhode Island