

Steven Sepe

From: awgarnett@gmail.com
Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 3:08 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Cc: 'Jed Thorp'; 'Stuart Ross'
Subject: Testimony in favor of H5706 - a bill to eliminate the politically-appointed CRMC Council and rename the stand-alone agency "The Department of Coastal Resources"

Importance: High

To: Representative Evan Shanley, Chair, House Committee on State Government & Elections

Re: SUPPORT for H5706 - AN ACT RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Date: April 8, 2025

From: Anne W. Garnett, 46 Cole Street, Jamestown, RI 02835

Dear Rep. Shanley,

I have lived full-time in Jamestown, RI for more than 40 years; and part-time since 1963. I received my Masters in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island, worked at Save The Bay for 12 years; the Roger Williams Park Zoo for 3 years; and headed the Aquidneck Island Land Trust for 5 years.

Narragansett Bay is a global treasure and deserves and requires a government agency up to the task to ensure it is stewarded and safeguarded for the next eon.

The current configuration and governance of the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is seriously lacking in its ability to steward and safeguard the natural resources of Narragansett Bay and its 420-mile coastline, including the 200' land buffer adjacent to each of these 420 miles.

Why? It has an inept council of politically appointed volunteers who a) rarely show up for their meetings – a quorum has not been met in years; b) are heavily conflicted by private gain and personal benefit – notably those on the council with economic interests in commercial shipping, commercial marinas, etc.; c) do not hold their responsibilities to strictly enforce the laws and regulations promulgated in the enabling legislation that created the CRMC and similar bodies around the country: the federal Coastal Zone Management Act; the CRMC's own Red Book; and the environmental and governance laws of the State of Rhode Island; and d) too often ignore the advice and recommendations of CRMC's professional staff. Too often the RI court system has had to intervene to get CRMC to do its job correctly. Recent egregious CRMC Council decisions: the Dumplings Cove vs. Safe Harbors Jamestown Boatyard; Champlin's Marina in Block Island; and the Quidnessett Country Club's illegal rockwall in Type 1 waters that has blocked public access and harmed Narragansett Bay. Each of these – just within the past few years – has been overturned by the RI Superior Court and at the strong championship of RI Attorney General Peter Neronha.

Rhode Island can and MUST do better for its #1 natural, cultural and economic asset: Narragansett Bay.

I strongly support, along with Save The Bay and Protect Conanicut Coastline, that H5706 is presented to the full RI Statehouse for a vote to APPROVE IT as soon as possible in the 2025 session.

RI AG Neronha has worked hard to help craft H5706, which will eliminate the politically-appointed Council, rename the agency as the Department of Coastal Resources, create an appointed "community advisory board" to advise on policies and programs, and require the hiring of a staff attorney.

On behalf of all citizens, voters and future generations of those who live near, recreate on, and make their livelihoods upon Narragansett Bay, please pass H5706 through the House Committee on State Government and Elections and champion it strongly before the entire RI State Legislature for immediate passage.

Thank you.

Anne W Garnett
RI Taxpayer; RI property owner; RI voter
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