

To: The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker, Rhode Island House of Representatives
The Honorable Dominick Ruggerio, President, Rhode Island Senate
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for Shoreline Access Bill S 417A

Dear Mr. Speaker & Mr. President,

Collectively, the undersigned individuals and organizations write to express our support for the language currently included in bill S 417A, relating to shoreline access. In doing so, we also extend our gratitude for your collective attention to this issue, and your leadership in fostering legislation that is on the verge of passing into RI General Laws.

In their original forms there were several differences between bills H 5174 and S 417, introduced by Rep. Terri Cortvriend and Sen. Mark McKenney respectively during the current legislative session. Most prominently, there was considerable distance between the boundaries proposed in each, although both reflected the *intent* of a 2021 Legislative Study Commission on which both legislators served – to provide a clear, identifiable boundary where Constitutional “privileges of the shore” are protected.

Understanding that at this point reconciliation between Chambers is necessary to pass a unified bill in concurrence, we are encouraged by recent public statements from both House and Senate Leadership expressing that negotiations have occurred, and that each side is optimistic that an agreement is forthcoming. Additionally, we are encouraged by the publication of S 417 Sub A, which includes elements of S 417, H 5174, and new language that further contributes to the amended bill.

Specifically, we support:

- **A boundary 10 feet inland of the “recognizable high tide line”**, as this is both the consensus recommendation of the 2021 Study Commission and represents a “middle-ground” compromise between the boundaries originally proposed in each bill.
- **The inclusion of language that clarifies that the public’s boundary is linked to the maximum height of each rising tide**, recognizing the dynamic nature of the tides may, from time to time, result in the highest reach of the most recent tide marking the shore below a prior (but still recognizable) mark because of natural fluctuations in wind, waves, and other phenomena. While the added language will occasionally move the boundary toward the water, sometimes by several feet, the *intent* of the Study Commission was to establish a boundary linked to the *most recent* high tide, and added language affirms the dynamic nature of the tides.
- **The inclusion of language that directs CRMC, DEM, and the RI Attorney General to develop information and guidance for public education and signage**, recognizing that there is a considerable need to inform both the public, and landowners whose property abuts the shore, on the practical application of this legislation on Rhode Island’s shoreline.

Again, we thank you for the significant time and attention that each chamber has committed so far, bringing this initiative to the verge of passage. We believe that both chambers have contributed meaningfully to the language included in S 417A, which we strongly support. Finally, we respectfully urge you to support S 417A, and publish an amended version of H 5174 to match, and pass these bills in concurrence so that they can be transmitted to the Governor and signed into law.

Sincerely,



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