



## THE PROVIDENCE FOUNDATION

March 12, 2020

The Honorable Senator William Conley  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance  
State House, 82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: S2337, Section 9, I-195 Park Naming Rights

Chairman Conley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Providence Foundation values open space and has a long history of improving public spaces as an essential element to attracting new economic activity. Proper operations and maintenance of the I-195 park will be key to the success of the Innovation District and attracting new development to our state. Naming rights and other sponsorships are major opportunities to bring in outside support for the park and to ensure that it is a welcoming and inviting space that will attract new jobs, activity, and investment to Rhode Island.

With that in mind, we respectfully request that you review and take into consideration both the length and the opportunity costs of the proposed naming rights agreement outlined in Section 9 of Senate Bill 2337 to ensure that this new asset receives a level of support that is both appropriate and in-line with similar recent park naming agreements.

First, as the legislation is currently drafted, the naming rights agreement would last 23 years, far longer than other naming rights agreements both locally and around the country, and there are no provisions for renewal or renegotiation included. Many similar parks have seen the market for naming rights and sponsorship increase considerably in the first three to five years after opening so such a long-term agreement would limit the state's ability to reap the benefits of a successfully run public space. In the interests of the park and the taxpayers, we would suggest shortening the naming rights agreement and adding clear renewal and renegotiation clauses.

Second, there are many opportunity costs to considering the naming rights to the park separately from other sponsorship agreements. Usually, sponsorship amounts are tied to "activation and fulfillment packages," which set expectations and benefits for both the park and the sponsor, but none are included in the proposed language, leaving the I-195 Commission with little leverage to negotiate. Moreover, park naming rights agreements are generally considered in concert with other sponsorship opportunities in order to increase revenue. Establishing the naming rights first and separately may limit how much other potential partners are willing to pay to sponsor a concert series or other activities in the park.

The Providence Foundation is very supportive of this park and this opportunity, and simply want to ensure that the best agreement possible is reached. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue

Sincerely,

Cliff Wood  
Executive Director