

Dear House Education Committee,

I'm writing in support of H 7342. In my professional capacity I serve as Program Director - Food, Climate and Environment for the Rhode Island Food Policy Council.

I am writing on my personal behalf as the Council's members have not had time to collectively evaluate the bill. However I can say this is supported by many in our network and I want to speak to what I've seen here in RI.

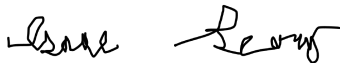
In Rhode Island we have some of the best systems in place nationwide for helping schools move towards more sustainable and financially sound practices when it comes to managing surplus and wasted food. With help from great organizations like Rhode Island School Recycling Project, CET, WasteNaut Consulting and more there's no particularly good reason a school should not have a program in place that complies with the EPA Wasted Food Scale. In the short term there may be some minor costs to implementation but long term the school and its service providers can achieve significant savings or at a minimum cost neutrality.

The bill does place some additional burden on both RIDE and the school service providers. However I believe that this burden is minimal. Should RIDE request, I can personally offer to help, alongside our partners, design the form for tracking compliance. Filling out the form should not be difficult for school service providers.

The bill also provides some penalties for lack of compliance. While I understand that school food service providers are under pressure to provide services on a low budget, I do not believe complying with the law should be an undue burden. No one's goal is to restrict a service provider's ability to bid. Nor is their goal to charge them a fine. It is simply to encourage them to comply with the existing law. Avoiding these penalties is imminently achievable, so we should hold them to doing so. Doing so will help demonstrate that the myths and stigmas that prevent some schools from moving forward, are just that.

Our landfill is rapidly filling and our waste rates will at least double. Our students are going hungry when they could be eating perfectly edible food that otherwise goes to waste. Climate Change is already causing chaos for our state. Three years since this law was originally passed it's time to take action to ensure we see

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Isaac Bearg". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Isaac Bearg  
Providence, RI 02903