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Testimony in support of H-5342

February 27, 2025

Honorable Chairperson Bennett and members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am the founder and president of Eat Drink RI, one of the top media and marketing companies in the region for all things culinary. As an advocate for our food system, a small business owner who wants to see our state's food and drink economy thrive, and as a citizen concerned about our loss of agriculture and what that can mean for food insecurity, **I strongly support H-5342.**

The fees collected by the Division of Agriculture generate between \$3.5 and \$4 million each year. These fees, collected from a variety of sources such as commercial fertilizer registrations, nursery worker licenses, soil amendments, deer damage permits, and commercial pesticide applicator licenses, are deposited into the general fund and don't directly benefit the Division of Agriculture. Other divisions in DEM, such as Forestry, have their own restricted receipt accounts allowing them to utilize collected fees for their programs. Given that both Forestry and Agriculture are housed within the same department, it makes sense, and is fair, that the Division of Agriculture should have access to its fee revenue as well.

This bill doesn't add any costs or new taxes to our state budget but ensures that our farming community receives at least as much financial support as it gives to the state in annual fees. This is especially important now, with the freezing of many of the federal funding programs that have been supporting our farms.

Thank you to Leader Chippendale and his co-sponsors on H-5342. Respectfully, I urge you to pass H-5342 forward to the full House for passage this session. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Dadekian