

H 5342 SUPPORT

Dear members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I have been a full-time farmer for 20+ years. This is a long overdue, practical bill that would allow for fees collected from farmers by the Division of Agriculture to be returned specifically to the to the division, rather than a general fund. This would greatly assist farmers and RIDEM Division of Agriculture, which has been understaffed and underfunded for many years.

As you may know, the Division was unable to continue their organic certification program in 2023 due to lack of funding and staff. Costs for organic certification by an out of State private company have resulted in a six-fold increase in costs to farmers.

Rhode Island has primarily small and medium sized farms which need support; this a relatively simple, no cost piece of legislation at a time when farmers face multiple challenges.

Please support bill 5342.

Regards,

Maria Mack