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**Testimony in support of H-7995**

April 10, 2024

Honorable Chairperson Abney and the members of the House Finance 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 changing climate and food insecurity, **I strongly support H-7995.**

Rhode Island's 2022 food insecurity rate was reported at 31%, 18.2% above the national average. The RI Community Food Bank reports improvement in 2023 at 29%, however, households with children under 18 saw a jump to 38%.

Meanwhile, ReFED estimates 33.2% of Rhode Island's surplus food was produced by industry sectors in 2022 (farms, foodservice, manufacturing and retail businesses), accounting for 128 million pounds of unused food. Of this, only 7.4% was donated, despite food donation being among the most preferred methods of avoiding waste according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Instead, 42% fed the landfill and 50.6% was sent to animal feed, compost, anaerobic digestion, etc. In all, the equivalent of over 145.77 million meals were sent to animal feed, compost, anaerobic digestion and landfill use from industry sectors in 2022. Moving forward, if a conceivable 10% were fit for consumption and donated as outlined by the EPA, ~14.57 million meals would boost food security for Rhode Islanders annually.

Food donation will also lessen impacts caused by food spoilage in RI landfills by reducing methane gasses, 25 times more harmful to the environment than carbon dioxide; and extend the life of the Central Landfill, projected to reach capacity by 2040.

Increasing food donation of both excess and non-excess food is critical to make Rhode Island 100% food secure with 0% food loss, aligning with the White House National Strategy goal to end hunger by 2030 and the Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste to "reduce greenhouse gas emissions; save households and businesses money; and build cleaner, healthier communities."

Thank you to Representative McEntee and her co-sponsors on H-7995. Respectfully, I urge you to pass H-7995 forward to the full House for passage this session. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Dadekian