

House Finance Committee
Senate Fiscal Office, Rm 117
State House, Providence RI 02903

April 29, 2025

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 742

Dear Chairperson Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Erinn Roberts and I am a constituent living in Riverside, District 18.

I am writing in support of the Healthy School Meals for All initiative in Rhode Island. As a parent of a public elementary school student, a strong proponent of the well being of all Rhode Island students, a former vegetable farmer and a supporter of more local dollars going towards local farms and food purchases, I see this bill as of high importance. Providing universal breakfast and lunch has proven to improve student health outcomes and student academic performance. Every newsletter I receive from my daughter's school emphasizes the statewide effort to improve student attendance rate; providing universal school meals is an effective tool towards this effort.

I work closely with people, organizations and businesses that have been deeply affected by the turmoil of this federal administration and have felt it myself. Social safety nets and healthcare resources are in the crosshairs and we are headed towards greater need for assistance in providing for basic human needs. With current estimates already at 38% of Rhode Island households experiencing food insecurity, this bill is one of the most direct ways of investing in the health and well-being of our children. With 68% of Rhode Islanders supporting free school lunches for all K-12 students, there is a clear mandate for the state government to make this a priority.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 742.

Sincerely,

Erinn Roberts