

April 30, 2025

House Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island State House  
HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov

Re: **Testimony SUPPORTING HB 5742**, Healthy School Meals for All

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Committee Members,

As a retired elementary school teacher, I've seen firsthand how hunger affects a child's ability to learn and thrive. That's why I'm writing in strong support of House Bill 5742. Food insecurity continues to be a serious issue in Rhode Island, especially for families with children. 38% of Rhode Island households with children struggle to afford enough food. That's far too many—and not all of them qualify for free school meals under current federal rules.

It breaks my heart to think of students sitting in a classroom trying to focus on reading or math while worrying about their next meal. No child should have to carry that burden.

Proper nutrition is foundational to a child's development. When students don't get enough to eat, it affects their physical health, emotional well-being, and academic performance. And the long-term effects can make it even harder for them to break the cycle of poverty.

House Bill 5742 is a vital step toward ensuring that every child in our state has access to the nourishment they need to learn and grow. By providing healthy school meals for all, we're not just supporting students—we're investing in a healthier, more equitable future for Rhode Island.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support this important legislation. Our children—and our state—deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for all of your work on behalf of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Gerard,  
Providence, RI