



April 30, 2025

TO: The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair  
Members, House Finance Committee

FROM: Carol Costa, Executive Director  
Senior Agenda Coalition of RI (SACRI)

**RE: Support for H5775**

The Senior Agenda Coalition of RI (SACRI) is pleased to support H 5775, AN ACT RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- MEDICAL ASSISTANCE sponsored by Representatives Caldwell, Potter, Morales, Slater, Kazarian and Cruz.

H5775 calls for creation of a one-year pilot program of evidenced-based nutritional assistance and medically tailored meals, groceries and produce prescriptions for individuals with diet-related diseases or food insecurity for certain beneficiaries where there is a clinical need. The pilot program would be carefully structured and be available to individuals with three (3) or more chronic, diet-related health conditions for a period of up to six (6) months. There would be two (2) randomized cohorts of participants, and each cohort would have a minimum of one hundred and forty-two (142) participants.

And a report on the outcome of the pilot would be provided to the general assembly. The bill seeks an appropriation of \$1.5Million to implement the pilot. EOHHS would be authorized to seek any demonstration waiver requests.

Reports from the RI Community Food Bank and the RI Life Index clearly show the significant extent of food insecurity in the state with a greater incidence among black and Hispanic households. Persons of color also face inequities in diet-related diseases like diabetes. A 2019 study of healthy food prescriptions in the form of vouchers for Medicare and Medicaid enrollees found them to be 'more cost effective as other common interventions, such as preventative drug treatments for hypertension or high cholesterol.

With food prices and costs for other basic needs such as housing increasing, creating a pilot to assist lower-income older adults and adults with disabilities on Medicaid with the costs of medically-tailored meals is especially important. Data shows that almost 15% of older Rhode Islanders receive SNAP benefits, 11% have income below the federal poverty level (\$15,650-single person) and 46% of older households have income less than \$50,000. Sixty-three percent of RIsers age 65+ have 4 or more chronic diseases. And many have conditions such as diabetes (32. %) and chronic kidney disease (34%) which require specialized diets. Assisting with the costs of specialized diets can help beneficiaries stick to their prescribed dietary guidelines and can lead to fewer in-patient admissions and better health outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

1. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2730768>