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Testimony in support of HB 5534

May 13, 2025

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 HB 5534.**

We have about 80 urban farmers and 120 small farmers (less than 5 acres each) in Rhode Island. They provide many benefits, public services, economic security and mobility for new Rhode Islanders, and are models of know-how and practice at producing healthy food at low cost. Day after day, they are providing fresh food for RI residents in food desert communities. Notably, most BIPOC farmers are small or urban farmers.

The tax relief programs that exist were designed over 30 years ago, they just don't fit anymore. We need to keep them up to date so more people can eat fresh, healthy, and affordable food in our state where the cost of agricultural land keeps going up and the size of farms keeps going down. Updating these programs also helps as the definition of farming shifts rapidly due to the changing climate.

Thank you to Representative McGaw and her co-sponsors on HB 5534. Respectfully, I urge you to pass HB 5534 forward to the full House for passage this session. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Dadekian