

Dear House/Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill H5534 and Senate Bill S431, which will be heard in committees at the State House this Tuesday, May 13. As a dedicated farm supporter and chair of the board for Farm Fresh RI, I believe these bills are crucial for the equitable treatment of urban and small farms in Rhode Island.

These bills aim to extend the same tax incentives currently afforded to larger farms to urban and small farms. These smaller farms are integral parts of our communities, providing fresh, low/no-cost food, nutrition education, job training, and numerous environmental benefits such as storm runoff mitigation and soil carbon sequestration. Despite their significant contributions, they have been excluded from receiving the tax benefits that larger farms enjoy.

The passage of H5534 and S431 will ensure that urban and small farms can continue to thrive and support their neighbors. These farms are the fastest-growing segment of our farming community, responding to increasing consumer demand for fresh, local food. By providing these tax benefits, we can boost the financial sustainability of these farms, especially at a time when federal support is no longer available. Moreover, access to fresh, locally grown foods can significantly improve the health and well-being of our state's residents by providing nutritious options that support healthier lifestyles and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

I urge you to support these bills and help create a more equitable and sustainable farming community in Rhode Island. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Auger
Johnston, RI