

Dear Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing in strong support of **H5534**, which extends long-overdue state tax benefits to small and urban farms in Rhode Island.

As a Farm Fresh Rhode Island board member, I have seen firsthand the critical role these farms play in ensuring access to healthy, affordable, locally grown food, especially in underserved communities. Today, Rhode Island is home to over **170 small farms and 80 urban farms**, many under 5 acres in size, that are currently excluded from state tax benefits created decades ago when such farms were rare.

These small-scale farms are not only **economically viable businesses**, they are also essential **community assets**. They offer job training, nutrition education, outdoor activities, and access to fresh produce in both urban and rural areas. They promote environmental resilience through practices like stormwater runoff mitigation and carbon sequestration, directly contributing to public health and sustainability goals.

H5534 is carefully crafted to ensure eligibility is based on legitimate farm operations, requiring applicants to file IRS farm documents and meet state criteria—mirroring standards for larger farms.

At a time when federal support is diminishing, this bill will help level the playing field and support the long-term viability of Rhode Island's most dynamic and community-rooted farms.

Thank you for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kristine Merz

Board Member, Farm Fresh Rhode Island

Kristine Merz

She/Her/Hers

President

[Orange Square](#)