

I am a RI citizen writing to support equal opportunities for small farms that are already available for large farms.

- State tax benefits for farms were created 40 years ago when there were very few small farms, so farms under 5 acres were excluded.

- Today, RI has approximately 80 urban farms and over 170 small farms, but these farms are excluded from receiving the tax benefits that larger farms enjoy. Despite this, small farms are the fastest growing segment of our farming community (USDA 2022 Ag Census)!

- Our urban farms now provide fresh, low/no-cost food, nutrition education, exercise and outdoor recreation, job training, and a wealth of social activities to their communities. In other words, they provide many public health benefits in addition to being small businesses.

- Our small farms are located throughout the state, from urban core to rural areas. Most small farms are intensively growing specialty veggies, fruits and flowers and are financially sustainable small businesses. They are responding to increasing consumer demand for fresh, local food. In addition to providing jobs and revenues, most of them are also providing their communities with environmental benefits such as storm runoff mitigation and soil carbon sequestration.

- HB5534 and SB431 are carefully structured to ensure that only eligible small and urban farms can apply for tax benefits. Similar to the eligibility requirements for larger farms, small and urban farms must file farm IRS documents and meet other state requirements for farms in order to qualify.

- The tax benefits provided by this bill will provide an important boost to the financial sustainability of our small and urban farms at a time when federal support is no longer available.

I hope that this legislation is approved to keep our local farms GROWING!

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