

Testimony in Support of H-5536: Joint Resolution Making An Appropriation Of \$200,000 To Be Used For Incentives For Fruits And Vegetables Sold At Participating Bonus Bucks Outlets In Rhode Island (authorizes The Appropriation Of The Sum Of \$200,000 For Incentives For The Farm Fresh Bonus Bucks Program.)

Representative Marvin L. Abney, Chair  
Representative Scott A. Slater, First Vice Chair  
Representative Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair  
House Finance Committee

Submitted by:  
Kelly Lynn Bouchard

Date of Hearing:  
Thursday, May 22, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am a registered dietitian and the project coordinator for a research study on early childhood nutrition at Brown University. I am writing to voice my support for the passage of H-5536.

Food-insecure individuals face multiple barriers to consistently acquiring healthy foods. Farm Fresh Rhode Island's Bonus Bucks initiative offers SNAP recipients \$1.00 in SNAP credits to be used at farmer's markets for every \$1.00 they spend on produce, thereby expanding access to fresh fruit and vegetables. With up to thirty-eight percent of Rhode Islanders facing food insecurity last year,<sup>1</sup> it is imperative that we support efforts to establish food equity.

Since its implementation in 2009, Farm Fresh Rhode Island has supported the economy by independently raising and administering \$1.7 million in Bonus Bucks to local food vendors. This bill also has the potential to prevent major healthcare burdens, as high fruit and vegetable intake is associated with a reduced risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, renal failure, and certain cancers.

H-5536 would cement an effective program into our state's efforts to foster a healthy population and a strong local economy. I urge the Finance Committee to support this bill. I thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Lynn Bouchard, MS, RD, LDN

Source

1. 2024 Status Report on Hunger in Rhode Island.

[https://rifooodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-Status-Report\\_Web.pdf](https://rifooodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-Status-Report_Web.pdf)