

Victoria Reyda
Aquidneck Community Table
Seasonal Market Manager
Testimony in support of HB-5536

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Victoria, and I'm writing to express my strong support for **HB-5536**, a bill that advances equitable food access and supports Rhode Island's farmers through nutrition incentives and direct sales programs.

This bill represents more than policy—it represents hope, dignity, and a practical path toward a more resilient local food system.

Nutrition incentives like the Rhode Island Bonus Bucks program have proven to be life-changing for families across our state. These programs stretch SNAP dollars when spent on fresh fruits and vegetables, making healthy food more affordable while directly supporting local growers. It's a win-win: families eat healthier, and small farms stay viable.

During our 2024 market season, the Bonus Bucks program proved to be a valuable resource for our community on Aquidneck Island. At our Saturday market in Middletown, we welcomed 17,954 attendees, with a total of \$2,059 in Bonus Bucks redeemed. Our Wednesday market in Newport saw 17,601 attendees, with a significantly higher redemption of \$6,591 in Bonus Bucks. These numbers highlight both the popularity of our markets and the meaningful impact of the Bonus Bucks program in increasing food access and supporting local vendors. Additionally, farmers gain loyal customers and a sustainable income source by selling directly to their communities.

In a time when food insecurity continues to rise, this bill provides a smart, compassionate response.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to a healthier, more just Rhode Island.

Sincerely,
Victoria