

Dear House Finance Committee,

As the co-owner of Roots Farm in Tiverton, and a commercial farmer in RI for the past 15 years, I am writing in support of HB5536, which would provide funds to sustain the Bonus Bucks program.

Our farm does three farmers markets here in RI, two of which are year-round, and this sales outlet is 2/3rds of our annual gross income. At these markets, we accept SNAP and Bonus Bucks. The Bonus Bucks program is a win-win program, as it provides financial assistance to households in need to get high quality local produce, while also supporting local farmers.

In 2024, we at Roots Farm received a total of \$8,786 in SNAP + Bonus Bucks. This is a substantial amount, and it would hurt our business (and our SNAP + BB customers who eat our vegetables) to lose this revenue.

One point that I want to make clear with this letter, is that as vegetable farmers, **approximately 95% of the total SNAP + BB we receive are Bonus Bucks.** Because of the restrictions on what the coins can be used for, customers can only use their Bonus Bucks coins with produce farms. If the Bonus Bucks program no longer exists, we would lose over \$8,000 in sales each year. SNAP can be used for any food at markets, and thus would continue to be spent on bread, pastries, and other processed foods.

For the health of our community, we need to encourage purchasing of healthy, fresh produce, and that is exactly what the Bonus Bucks program does.

Sincerely,
Kelli G. Roberts
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