

**Written Testimony in Support of HJR 7127, Article 5 (Rep. Abney)
In Support of Increasing the Child Tax Credit to \$650 per Child**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alison Tovar, and I am an Associate Professor at the Brown University School of Public Health. My research focuses on food and nutrition insecurity and its impact on health, child development, and economic stability. I am writing in strong support of the Governor's initiative to create a fully refundable state Child Tax Credit (CTC) and to encourage increasing the amount to \$650 per child.

In Rhode Island, too many families are struggling to meet their basic needs. Data show that 78% of single-parent households with two children and 34% of two-parent households with two children earn less than what is required to meet basic needs without assistance. These families are working, but their incomes do not stretch far enough to cover housing, childcare, transportation, food, and healthcare.

Between 2019 and 2023, 13% of children in Rhode Island lived in poverty, and the burden is disproportionately borne by children of color. Poverty is not an abstract statistic — it is directly linked to food insecurity, poorer health outcomes, lower academic performance, and long-term economic instability.

In my research and through partnerships with community organizations across the state, I see firsthand how income instability translates into food insecurity. Families experiencing poverty are significantly more likely to struggle to afford sufficient, nutritious food. Food insecurity in childhood is associated with higher rates of chronic disease, mental health challenges, and developmental delays. Addressing child poverty is therefore one of the most effective public health strategies available to us.

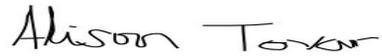
If enacted, the state Child Tax Credit would meaningfully reduce child poverty in Rhode Island. At \$325 per child, the CTC is projected to decrease child poverty by 2.12%. Increasing the credit to \$650 per child would reduce child poverty by 6.38%, with the greatest benefit accruing to low-income families and families and children of color.

The evidence is clear: refundable tax credits increase household stability, reduce food insecurity, and improve child well-being. Unlike many programs, a refundable CTC allows families to make decisions that best meet their needs — whether that is food, rent, childcare, transportation, or utilities.

I strongly support HJR 7127, Article 5, and respectfully urge you not only to enact a fully refundable Child Tax Credit, but to increase the amount to \$650 per child in order to maximize its impact on reducing child poverty and strengthening Rhode Island families.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to supporting children and families across our state.

Alison Tovar

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Tovar". The letters are cursive and fluid, with the first name "Alison" and the last name "Tovar" clearly distinguishable.

Associate Professor^[SEP]

Associate Professor
Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Brown University School of Public Health
Tel: 401-863-7327
Box G-S121-4, Providence, RI 02912, USA