



To: Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee  
From: Kate Brewster, Chief Executive Officer, Jonnycake Center for Hope  
Date: March 3, 2026  
Re: In Support of Governor McKee's Budget Bill, H-7127, Article 5, Sections 5 & 6

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Jonnycake Center for Hope, I write in strong support of Governor McKee's budget proposal, H-7127, Article 5, Sections 5 and 6, establishing a refundable child tax credit in Rhode Island. A refundable child tax credit is a proven and effective strategy to reduce childhood poverty and provide meaningful stability to working families.

The Jonnycake Center operates one of the largest food pantries in the state, serving approximately 2,000 individuals from South Kingstown, Narragansett, Block Island, and Jamestown. Every day, we see firsthand the impact that financial instability has on children and their families.

In 2021, during the period when the federal Child Tax Credit was expanded and stimulus payments and enhanced SNAP benefits were in place, we experienced a 40 percent decrease in pantry visits. That decline was not coincidental. It reflected the real, measurable impact of direct financial support to families with children.

That same year, we surveyed more than 300 households and asked how they used their COVID stimulus funds. Seventy-five percent reported using the funds primarily to purchase food and pay monthly bills. Sixty percent identified housing and rent as the next most common expense they met with stimulus funds. Families used these resources responsibly - to keep food on the table, a roof overhead, and utilities connected.

As federal reductions to SNAP and Medicaid eligibility begin to take effect, low-income families are at increased risk of food insecurity, loss of health coverage, and deepening financial hardship. A refundable child tax credit is a targeted, efficient step Rhode Island can take to mitigate these risks and protect its most vulnerable residents.

We commend Governor McKee for advancing this important proposal and respectfully urge the House and Senate to include this provision in the FY27 budget.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony and for your commitment to policies that strengthen Rhode Island's children and families. I respectfully recommend passage of H-7127, Article 5, Sections 5 and 6.