



March 25, 2026

Representative Teresa Tanzi, Chair
Rhode Island House Committee on Finance, Subcommittee on Human Services

RE: Department of Human Services FY27 budget appropriation of \$1,950,000 to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank

Dear Chair Tanzi and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your continued support of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and our neighbors struggling with hunger. We are incredibly grateful that the General Assembly allocated \$950,000 to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank last year. That investment made a real difference for thousands of Rhode Islanders facing record-high food costs.

Unfortunately, the need has continued to grow. Our *2025 Status on Hunger Report* revealed that 1 in 3 Rhode Island households now experiences food insecurity. In late 2025, food assistance reached historic levels—over 102,000 Rhode Islanders turned to local food pantries in November alone. At a time when food donations have declined, we find ourselves serving more food to more people, with less resources.

We appreciate that Governor McKee heard and recognized that and has proposed doubling last year's allocation to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank in his FY27 budget. The increase, to \$1,950,000, would allow us to purchase and distribute nutritious, culturally relevant, local and safe food to our network of 137 partner agencies across the entire state.

We also know that on the horizon there are additional changes to SNAP that will cause our neighbors to lose or see a reduction in their benefits. It's estimated that nearly 32,000 Rhode Islanders will experience a loss of \$9.5 million in food assistance; an amount too high for the charitable network to ever cover or make up for. Yet, we will do everything we can to help alleviate the stress they face when they turn to our network of emergency food programs. Without an increase in state funding, it will be impossible to meet the growing needs and ensure no one goes hungry.

In addition to Governor McKee's budget proposal, there is a separate House and Senate bill requesting the General Assembly allocate \$3 million for food purchases to help meet the ever-growing need.

We respectfully ask the Subcommittee to support the appropriation request in the Governor's budget for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. This investment will ensure that every Rhode Islander facing hunger has access to the food they need to stay healthy, secure and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration and continued partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,

Melissa Cherney, CEO