

April 27, 2026

**Subject: FOR H7242**

Dear Chair and Esteemed Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Dr. Alison Tovar, and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the Brown University School of Public Health, where my work focuses on nutrition, food systems, and health equity. I write in strong support of H7242, the Urban and Small Farm Success Act, which would extend many of the same benefits currently available to larger farms to Rhode Island farmers operating on fewer than five acres.

My research over the past 15 years has focused on improving dietary behaviors in communities disproportionately affected by food insecurity. This work consistently demonstrates that access to fresh, locally grown food is a critical determinant of community health — and that small and urban farms play an outsized role in providing that access. They bring fresh produce into neighborhoods that have historically been underserved by the conventional food system, build community in dense urban areas, train new and beginning farmers, and steward small parcels of land that would otherwise sit unused.

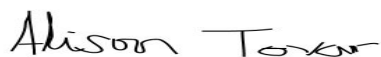
Yet under current policy, these farmers are excluded from many of the supports their larger colleagues rely on — simply because of the size of their operation. From a public health and food systems perspective, this is a policy gap with real consequences: it limits the financial sustainability of precisely the farms most likely to serve food-insecure communities and to anchor neighborhood-level food access.

H7242 corrects that imbalance. By leveling the playing field, this bill would meaningfully improve the financial viability of small and urban farms across Rhode Island, allowing them to grow, hire, and continue serving their communities. Supporting small and urban farms is a forward-looking investment in a more equitable, resilient, and healthy food system.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support H7242. Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on behalf of Rhode Island's farmers and food system.

Sincerely,

Alison Tovar, PhD (Providence, RI)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Tovar". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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