

To: Honorable Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee

From: Cara Mitchell

Date: May 14, 2026

Subject: Support for [House Bill 7258](#)

Dear Honorable Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Cara Mitchell, and I live in Bristol, RI. I'm writing in support of House Bill 7258 for funding for the Bonus Bucks Program. As former Food Access Program Director at Farm Fresh Rhode Island (2020-2023), I have seen firsthand the impact that the Bonus Bucks program has had both on food insecure Rhode Islanders and our farmers.

Not only are Farm Fresh's farmers markets are strategically located in areas with less access to fresh and healthy food, but the many of the farmers Farm Fresh RI partners with, primarily through Southside Community Land Trust and African Alliance of Rhode Island, are first-generation and immigrant farmers looking to build sustainable agricultural enterprises in a state where land is more expensive than any other state in the country. Bonus Bucks is a critical stream of revenue for the farmers that are essential to our local food system and economy. It's a win-win-win for increasing nutritional health, putting money in the pockets of local farmers and food businesses, and preserving farm and market viability. Importantly, this program does not just support Farm Fresh RI farmers markets, but markets and farm stands across the state including in rural areas.

This food is not only nutritious, but for many of our neighbors, culturally appropriate. I encourage members of this committee to visit one of the farmers markets with the Bonus Bucks program and see the long line of SNAP customers and hear their stories of how this program enables them to extend their dollar for fresh local food, some of which are crops not easily found in grocery stores. Farm fresh produce should not be a luxury, and this program is one of the few ways that makes this food accessible to those on a tight food budget.

Our society is currently facing ongoing policy shifts and administrative actions that undermine its advances in achieving food security and health equity. As the only state in New England that is not providing funding for this type of program connecting farmers and SNAP beneficiaries, we are leaving our farmers and low-income neighbors vulnerable without state funding to sustain the program.

Thank you,

Cara Mitchell