



May 14, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney  
House Committee on Finance  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: Support for House Resolution 7258**

On behalf of Farm Fresh Rhode Island, I am writing in strong support of **H5536: entitled, joint resolution making an appropriation of \$200,000 to be used for incentives for fruits and vegetables sold at participating bonus bucks outlets in Rhode Island.** Our organization operates programs which enhance the local food system of Rhode Island with particular attention to balancing farm viability and access to fresh food regardless of economic status.

Since 2009 Farm Fresh RI has been independently fundraising for and operating the Bonus Bucks program which doubles SNAP dollars spent at local seasonal farmers markets statewide. Simply put, Bonus Bucks helps SNAP recipients buy \$2 worth of fruits and vegetables using just \$1 of federal SNAP benefits – both increasing their buying power and supporting local farm businesses.

The Bonus Bucks program has grown to be an established resource for market vendors, shoppers and community advocates who have come to rely on it. Over the past 16 years Farm Fresh RI has funded and distributed over \$2 million in Bonus Bucks. **Since Bonus Bucks leverage federal funds, this means it's had a double impact and invested over \$4 million into the local food and agricultural economy since it's inception.**

Rhode Island is currently the only state in New England who has never dedicated state funds to support SNAP match programs like Bonus Bucks, which connect farmers and local food insecure populations. Our neighbors in Massachusetts have been funding the program earmarked specifically for farm businesses for over \$15 million on an annual basis, while Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Connecticut are funding these programs at levels ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 annually. In some of the other New England states, their programs are recognized as essential nutrition supports and administered through their community food banks themselves.

Farm Fresh RI has been largely supporting the Bonus Bucks program through a single federal USDA grant which is funded through May 2027. Funding for that federal award is highly competitive with less than 30% of projects funded annually. Farm Fresh RI will apply for GusNIP funding again this year to attempt to secure funding for FY27, but funding is not guaranteed. The federal grant requires a 1:1 match and a state appropriation will strengthen our application and increase ability to access federal dollars. As the program

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has grown and scaled, we have seen an annual average distribution of over \$230,000 and state support is critical to prevent disruptions in service in the uncertain years to come. Our \$200,000 appropriations request will cover a majority of anticipated direct incentive dollars – dollars that go from consumers to local farmers and food businesses – for one program year and Farm Fresh RI will continue to fundraise for all administrative implementation costs.

Funding for this program is a win-win for public health and economic development. It empowers SNAP participants to be able to access healthy locally-grown produce and strengthens our local Rhode Island food economy by directing federal food dollars into small food and farm businesses. Now more than ever we need to be prioritizing investing in solutions that have dual impacts to support healthy communities and keep our tax dollars in the state.

Sincerely,

Janet Coit

Executive Director

Farm Fresh Rhode Island

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