

Alison Tovar

115 Benefit St, Providence, RI 02903

House Finance Committee

Re: In support of H 7259

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee;

I'm writing in support of Representative Slater's bill to allocate \$3 million to the RI Community Food Bank.

I am Alison Tovar and I am an Associate Professor at the Brown University School of Public Health. I also am a constituent of Gabe Amo.

My research focuses on food and nutrition insecurity and its impact on health and economic stability. Through my work with community partners across Rhode Island, we are seeing sustained and growing demand for food assistance. Food pantries are serving more families than they did prior to the pandemic, and many are reporting record levels of need. We are seeing more working families, older adults on fixed incomes, and households struggling with rising housing, utility, and grocery costs.

Food insecurity is not just about hunger. It is directly linked to higher rates of chronic disease, poorer mental health, increased healthcare costs, and lower academic performance among children. Access to nutritious food is foundational to public health and to our state's economic well-being.

We are also deeply concerned about what may happen as the full impact of changes to federal support programs under H.R. 1 unfolds. If federal food assistance is reduced or restricted, we can expect even greater pressure on Rhode Island's charitable food system. When federal benefits shrink, families turn to local food banks and pantries to fill the gap.

Now more than ever, state leadership is critical. Increasing funding to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank will help ensure that organizations across the state can meet rising demand and prevent families from falling deeper into crisis.

We urge you to increase the state funding to the Food Bank so that organizations like mine can meet the growing need. Please pass **H 7259**

Thank you for support of the Food Bank and all you do to reduce food insecurity in Rhode Island

Signed,

Alison Tovar

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