



May 14, 2026

Chair Marvin Abney  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly

RE: In strong support of Representative Slater's Allocation to the RI Community Food Bank, H7259

Dear Chair Abney and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned member agencies of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, we write in strong support of the \$3 million allocation for the Food Bank proposed in H7259.

Demand for emergency food assistance reached historic highs in 2025, and the statewide charitable food network does not have the resources to absorb continued growth in need without meaningful state investment.

The Food Bank's 2025 Status Report shows that more than 102,000 Rhode Islanders sought help from the Food Bank's statewide network during the fall federal government shutdown alone, when SNAP benefits were paused. This number is up 35 percent from November 2020 and above an already historic 2024 level. The Status Report also found that one in three Rhode Island households experiences food insecurity, with especially severe impacts on Hispanic/Latino and Black households.

These numbers reflect not a short-term spike, but a sustained crisis. Purchased food is now the Food Bank's largest source of inventory because donated food has dropped from nearly 60 percent of supply a decade ago to less than 30 percent today. That shift means the charitable food network increasingly must buy the food needed to meet demand, making direct state support more important than ever.

At the same time, federal changes are likely to deepen pressure on local pantries and meal sites. We have already seen great increased need as SNAP participation is decreasing due to changes from the federal HR 1 legislation. Nearly 12% fewer Rhode Islanders are receiving SNAP than in December 2024 and this is before all the SNAP policy changes have been fully felt. We expect that when fully implemented, benefits for thousands of Rhode Island households will be reduced or eliminated.

The legislation introduced by Representative Slater for a \$3 million allocation for the Food Bank will help our agencies maintain food purchasing and distribution capacity at a time when charitable demand is high, federal supports are less reliable, and communities across Rhode Island are struggling with the combined pressures of housing, food, and health care costs. This investment will help ensure that we, the local pantries, meal sites, shelters, and community organizations can continue serving children, seniors, working families, and others who rely on us every day.



We respectfully urge you to support H7259 and include the full \$3 million appropriation in the final budget. Rhode Islanders in every community are depending on this network, and this is the moment for the state to strengthen that safety net.

Sincerely,

Deborah Thurston, Food Director, Barrington Tapln  
David Carpenter, Treasurer, Blessed Mother Mary Food Pantry  
David Walker, Director of Food Services, BVCAP  
Adriane Catlin, Board President, Camp Street Community Ministries  
Phyllis Montecalvo, Program Facilitator, Church of the Cross  
Ted Martin, Co-Chair, Community Food Share First Unitarian  
Chris Mansfield, President/CEO, Comprehensive Community Action Program.  
Chris and Steve Bartlett, Co-Directors, East Greenwich Interfaith Food Cupboard  
Myron Gadoury, Chairman, Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church Pantry  
Eli Escrogin, Program Manager, Embassy of Christ Food Pantry  
Marylou Williams-Blake, Director, Epiphany Soup Kitchen  
Frances Zawadzki, Food Pantry Coordinator/Overseer/Manager, Faith Fellowship Church  
David M. Martins, Director, AIDS Project RI, Family Service RI  
Cynthia Downie, Food Pantry Coordinator/Treasurer, First Baptist Church of Pawtucket Food Pantry  
Kevin Phelan, Pantry Manager, Interfaith Food Ministry  
Kate Brewster, Chief Executive Officer, Jonnycake Center for Hope  
Sarah Shaw, Director of Food Programs, Jonnycake Center of Westerly  
Autumn Carvalho, Manager, Joy Fellowship Pantry On The Lane  
Ron Rivet, Executive Director, Lime Rock Baptist Church Food Pantry  
Eileen Soltys, Director, Maryhouse St. Patrick's Church  
Jeanne Michon, Executive Director, New Beginnings, Inc.  
Kristin Jahne, Pantry Manager, North Kingstown Food Pantry  
Robynne Wildman, Parent Educator/Community Liaison, North Kingstown School Department  
Nellie Gaye, Founder, One Less Worry  
Joanne Lozy, Administrator, Pilgrim Lutheran Church Food Pantry  
Teddi Jallow, Executive Director, Refugee Dream Center  
Nadya Sanches, Family Engagement District Director, Segue IFL/Cowden Collab  
Victory Walsh, President, Food Pantry Manager, Society of St. Vincent de Paul St. Joseph, Newport Conference  
Teresa Perez, Program Director, St Edward Food and Wellness Center  
Rev Przemyslaw Lepak, Pastor, St Thomas Church



Linda A'Vant-Deishinni, Executive Director, St. Martin de Porres Center

Jeanne Buteau, Food manager, SVDP/St. John Paul II Pawtucket, RI

Joseph DeSantis, CEO, Tri-County CAP

Lesley Keates, Assistant Director, Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry, Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry

Denise Greene, Executive Director, West End Community Center

Raymond L. Dauplaise, President, West Warwick Assistance Agency

Jacqueline Watson Gardiner, Executive Director, Your Neighborhood Food Pantry