

14 May 2026

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

As a Rhode Island dietitian and community nutrition professional serving residents through food access and health education programs, I write in strong support of S2892/H8171, the Food as Medicine Pilot Program Act.

In my role managing a community food pantry and co-leading Food Is Medicine programming, my work focuses not only on improving food security, but also nutrition security - ensuring that individuals and families have consistent access to foods that support health, prevent disease, and improve quality of life. This is especially important for low-income Rhode Islanders, as food insecurity and chronic disease are deeply interconnected. Individuals experiencing food insecurity are at a significantly higher risk for conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and other diet-related illnesses.

Every day, I work with community members who are forced to balance the rising costs of housing, utilities, transportation, and medical care with the ability to purchase nutritious food. For many individuals living with chronic disease, healthy eating is not simply a lifestyle recommendation - it is a critical part of disease management and prevention. When access to nutritious food is limited, health outcomes worsen, healthcare utilization increases, and medical expenses place an even greater financial burden on families already struggling to make ends meet.

This legislation would establish a Food as Medicine Task Force to guide the development of a targeted Medicaid pilot program focused on improving health outcomes through access to nutritious meals. Importantly, it builds upon existing Food as Medicine initiatives already taking place in Rhode Island and creates an opportunity to develop evidence-based, fiscally responsible solutions that can reduce long-term healthcare costs while improving quality of life for residents.

Food is a foundational part of healthcare. Supporting access to nutritious food is not only preventative medicine, but also an investment in healthier communities and a stronger healthcare system across Rhode Island.

I respectfully urge the committee to support and pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Abigail Bloom, MS, RD, LDN
Jonnycake Center for Hope