

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

My name is Byron Fan, and I am a medical student in Rhode Island. I am writing in strong support of Bill H8171, Food-as-Medicine Pilot Program.

In my training at local free clinics and hospitals, I regularly see the heartbreaking reality of our state's healthcare gaps. Poor nutrition is a key preventable driver of cardiometabolic diseases like Type 2 diabetes and hypertension. When I sit with patients to explain a new diagnosis or complications, they frequently tell me they understand what they need to do, but simply cannot access or afford the fresh, low-sodium, or low-glycemic foods required to manage their illnesses.

Medicine is not sustainable in a nutritional vacuum. Major clinical bodies like the American Diabetes Association and the American Heart Association emphasize that medical nutrition therapy is a cornerstone of disease management. Evidence-based interventions like medically tailored meals drastically improve dietary behaviors regarding sodium, sugar, and fat consumption. Despite this clear medical consensus, food-as-medicine remains underfunded and under-supported, leaving our most vulnerable patients exposed to entirely preventable adverse health outcomes.

I believe that H8171 aligns Rhode Island's healthcare policy with established clinical standards. This bill treats food as the medical necessity it is, improving long-term health outcomes while reducing the burden of healthcare utilization on our state's budget.

For these reasons, I urge you to support Bill H8171 as a critical step towards providing the people of Rhode Island with the structural resources they need to live healthier lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Byron Fan