



May 11, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
housefinance@rilegislature.gov

**RE: Support for House Bill 8171 Food As Medicine Initiative**

Dear Chair Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 8171, which would establish a task force to develop a Food As Medicine Medicaid pilot program focused on improving health outcomes and reducing long term healthcare costs through access to nutritious meals.

As the State Long Term Care Ombudsman, I advocate daily for older adults and individuals with disabilities residing in long term care facilities and other supportive settings. Many of the individuals we serve live with chronic health conditions that are directly impacted by nutrition and food insecurity. Access to healthy, medically appropriate meals is often essential to maintaining health, preventing complications, and improving quality of life.

Too often, poor nutrition contributes to avoidable hospitalizations, worsening chronic illness, and increased healthcare utilization. A Food As Medicine initiative recognizes the important connection between nutrition and health outcomes and creates an opportunity to address healthcare needs in a more preventive, person-centered manner.

For vulnerable populations, including older adults and individuals with complex medical conditions, access to nutritious food can support recovery, help individuals remain healthier for longer periods, and potentially reduce healthcare costs associated with preventable medical complications.



House Bill 8171 represents an important step toward exploring innovative solutions that improve health outcomes while addressing long term system costs. I respectfully urge the Committee to support this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Light  
State Long Term Care Ombudsman