

TO: House Finance Committee

February 16, 2022

From: Candace Clavin, Rhode Island Farmer

Member of US Lavender Growers Association

Northeast Organic Farmers Association Rhode Island

Barrington Farm School

Facilitator - Annie's Project - Education for Farm Women

ReLaunch Rhode Island

RI Master Gardener

RE: Bill H7123 Governor's FY 2023 Budget, Article 5, Question 3, Green Economy Bonds  
Position: Against the proposed budget

Hard to think about the beauty and treasure of our Rhode Island farmlands with the snow and wintry ice outside. But right now as we tend to seedlings and start planning the warmer months' land use, the Green Bond is under consideration and we must address the preservation and protection of farmland.

Without previous help from the state of Rhode Island our tiny treasure of a farm, the Barrington Farm School, that does education, conservation, nutrition and community health and outreach would not exist. The preservation of this last piece of commercial farmland in Barrington, Rhode Island has become a place for teaching, eating, nutrition formation, educating, statewide outreach, community health, reaching into a variety of needs for folks age 2-90!

Protecting and preserving farmland and continuing using land for agriculture keeps our economy local. Local production, local jobs, meeting local food needs, physical and mental health needs, particularly evident to all of us over the past two years of Covid crisis.

The loss of farmland, and our relationship to where our food comes from in agriculture system is not reversible. Conservation of these farmland properties rewards the communities and towns in a long range vision. Gaze into the future and see a sense of place, a sense of ownership to Rhode Island. These are not little bits of land taken away for other purposes, these lands they keep a family farming and communities safe. They are tracts of land that historically have kept food on the table during good times and hard times in the Rhode Island communities. These are tracts of land that have kept wildlife, pollinators, birds and fauna alive in our state.

It is not just the open farmland that we are preserving but the perimeters, stream banks, the soil and trees that hold water in place. The conservation is not just of an open farmland, although it's difficult to see, that the surrounding land is also kept in balance with nature. We are asking to protect and conserve farm land that includes trees streams, gravel pits, hedgerows. These very components hold back flooding and stormwater disaster in your towns in Rhode Island.

Systems of farming may change on these lands but having the open space habitats for these different types of agriculture will be imperative. The truth is I want your children and my children to be able to farm in the future.

And if they don't want to farm we want them to see open farmland, healthy land, preserved land ag for future generations to use for food and agriculture, learning trades, and finding health and mental wellness.

“We need local farming so it we can understand it and engage in it and shape it to our values. Food production is too important to be pushed out of sight and out of mind. A significant share of our nutrition should be produced locally so we can see it and participate in it when we need. Food stuff and produce from foreign distant sources are not really subject to the regulations and safety welfare environment & hygiene that our state oversees.. We should not be strangers to the fields that feed us.”

Our citizens of Rhode Island deserve to have food justice, healthy local food and the space for this vibrant open space to remain protected.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Candace Clavin  
Farmer  
Water Way  
Barrington Rhode Island