

April 7, 2026

Rhode Island House Committee on Government
RE: Support for H7675 (Compost Fund) and H7999 (State Procurement)

Dear Chair and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I write to express my strong support for the passage of H7675 (The Compost Fund) and H7999. I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences at Brown University's School of Public Health, where my work focuses on nutrition, food systems, and health equity.

These bills represent important, complementary steps toward strengthening Rhode Island's food system and addressing the growing challenge of food waste. H7675, by establishing a modest surcharge on landfill bound waste and reinvesting those funds into food waste reduction, donation, and recycling efforts, creates a sustainable mechanism to build the infrastructure and programs our state urgently needs. At the same time, H7999 supports more flexible procurement processes, which can help institutions more readily source food and supplies, an important component of improving access and strengthening local food systems.

From both a public health and environmental perspective, reducing food waste is critical. Food waste represents not only a loss of resources, but also a missed opportunity to improve food access, support local agriculture, and reduce environmental impact. In Rhode Island, over 100,000 tons of food are sent to landfills each year, contributing significantly to our waste stream. With the projected closure of our landfill in the coming decades, proactive investment in diversion strategies is essential.

My research over the past 15 years has focused on improving dietary behaviors in communities disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Increasingly, this work points to the importance of aligning nutrition goals with environmental sustainability. Efforts to reduce food waste through composting, donation, and redistribution can simultaneously support healthier communities and a more resilient food system.

On a personal level, my family has practiced composting for many years, and I have seen firsthand how small, consistent changes can meaningfully reduce household waste. However, without broader systems and incentives, these practices remain unevenly adopted. H7675 provides a critical opportunity to scale these efforts statewide.

Together, these bills represent a thoughtful approach to addressing food waste, supporting local systems, and investing in long term sustainability. I respectfully urge the Committee to support H7675 and H7999.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Alison Tovar

Associate Professor
Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Brown University School of Public Health

Town: Providence