

April 7, 2026

Chairman Evan Shanley
House State Government and Elections Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7999

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the Committee:

I am writing as a Rhode Island food systems advisor working across agriculture, value-added production, and food businesses statewide. **I support House Bill 7999** to reform small purchase regulations for food and food supply procurement. Rhode Island's current procurement structure limits access for local producers and restricts institutions from making practical purchasing decisions.

I work directly with farmers, fishers, and food manufacturers who are ready to sell into institutional markets but are blocked by procurement thresholds and lowest-bid requirements. At the same time, schools, hospitals, and public institutions want fresher, higher-quality food, and stronger relationships with local suppliers. The current system prevents both sides from operating efficiently. This bill addresses a real operational barrier that affects daily purchasing decisions.

Increasing the small purchase threshold introduces needed flexibility. It allows institutions to source from local producers without navigating complex bid processes for modest purchases. This change creates immediate opportunities for Rhode Island businesses to compete for contracts, keeps food dollars in the local economy, and improves product quality for end users. Other states and cities have implemented similar reforms with measurable gains in local sourcing and supplier participation.

This is a targeted policy change with direct impact. It supports economic development, strengthens the regional food system, and improves procurement outcomes without requiring additional state funding.

I urge the committee to support House Bill 7999 and advance this reform.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maggie Longo

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