



April 28, 2026

Chair Louis DiPalma
Senate Finance Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

RE: In strong support of Senator Mack's Allocation to the RI Community Food Bank, S2237

Dear Chair DiPalma and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned member agencies of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, we write in strong support of the \$3 million allocation for the Food Bank proposed in S2237.

Demand for emergency food assistance reached historic highs in 2025, and the statewide charitable food network does not have the resources to absorb continued growth in need without meaningful state investment.

The Food Bank's 2025 Status Report shows that more than 102,000 Rhode Islanders sought help from the Food Bank's statewide network during the fall federal government shutdown alone, when SNAP benefits were paused. This number is up 35 percent from November 2020 and above an already historic 2024 level. The Status Report also found that one in three Rhode Island households experiences food insecurity, with especially severe impacts on Hispanic/Latino and Black households.

These numbers reflect not a short-term spike, but a sustained crisis. Purchased food is now the Food Bank's largest source of inventory because donated food has dropped from nearly 60 percent of supply a decade ago to less than 30 percent today. That shift means the charitable food network increasingly must buy the food needed to meet demand, making direct state support more important than ever.

At the same time, federal changes are likely to deepen pressure on local pantries and meal sites. We have already seen great increased need as SNAP participation is decreasing due to changes from the federal HR 1 legislation. Nearly 12% fewer Rhode Islanders are receiving SNAP than in December 2024 and this is before all the SNAP policy changes have been fully felt. We expect that when fully implemented, benefits for thousands of Rhode Island households will be reduced or eliminated.

The legislation introduced by Senator Mack/Representative Slater for a \$3 million allocation for the Food Bank will help our agencies maintain food purchasing and distribution capacity at a time when charitable demand is high, federal supports are less reliable, and communities across Rhode Island are struggling with the combined pressures of housing, food, and health care costs. This investment will help ensure that we, the local pantries, meal sites, shelters, and community organizations can continue serving children, seniors, working families, and others who rely on us every day.



We respectfully urge you to support S2237 and include the full \$3 million appropriation in the final budget. Rhode Islanders in every community are depending on this network, and this is the moment for the state to strengthen that safety net.

Sincerely,

Deborah Thurston, Food Director, Barrington TapIn
David Walker, Director of Food Services, BVCAP
Phyllis Montecalvo, Program Facilitator, Church of the Cross
Ted Martin, Co-Chair, Community Food Share First Unitarian
Chris Mansfield, President/CEO, Comprehensive Community Action Program.
Chris and Steve Bartlett, Co-Directors, East Greenwich Interfaith Food Cupboard
Myron Gadoury, Chairman, Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church Pantry
Eli Escrogin, Program Manager, Embassy of Christ Food Pantry
Marylou Williams-Blake, Director, Epiphany Soup Kitchen
Frances Zawadzki, Food Pantry Coordinator/Overseer/Manager, Faith Fellowship Church
David M. Martins, Director, AIDS Project RI, Family Service RI
Cynthia Downie, Food Pantry Coordinator/Treasurer, First Baptist Church of Pawtucket Food Pantry
Kevin Phelan, Pantry Manager, Interfaith Food Ministry
Kate Brewster, Chief Executive Officer, Jonnycake Center for Hope
Sarah Shaw, Director of Food Programs, Jonnycake Center of Westerly
Autumn Carvalho, Manager, Joy Fellowship Pantry On The Lane
Ron Rivet, Executive Director, Lime Rock Baptist Church Food Pantry
Eileen Soltys, Director, Maryhouse St. Patrick's Church
Kristin Jahne, Pantry Manager, North Kingstown Food Pantry
Robynne Wildman, Parent Educator/Community Liaison, North Kingstown School Department
Nellie Gaye, Founder, One Less Worry
Joanne Lozy, Administrator, Pilgrim Lutheran Church Food Pantry
Teddi Jallow, Executive Director, Refugee Dream Center
Victory Walsh, President, Food Pantry Manager, Society of St. Vincent de Paul St. Joseph, Newport Conference
Teresa Perez, Program Director, St Edward Food and Wellness Center
Rev Przemyslaw Lepak, Pastor, St Thomas Church
Linda A'Vant-Deishinni, Executive Director, St. Martin de Porres Center
Jeanne Buteau, Food manager, SVDP/St. John Paul II Pawtucket, RI
Joseph DeSantis, CEO, Tri-County CAP
Lesley Keates, Assistant Director, Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry, Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry
Denise Greene, Executive Director, West End Community Center
Raymond L. Dauplaise, President, West Warwick Assistance Agency