

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S 2238 —
AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION: PERSONAL INCOME TAX
Relating to Taxation — Personal Income Tax Reform

Submitted to: Senate Finance Committee

Date: April 29, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT**

Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of S 2238, Senator Murray's Tax Fairness Act. My name is Henriette Derbyshire. I am the manager of Good Neighbors food pantry in Riverside, and every week I see firsthand what these numbers mean in human terms: more families lining up at our door, more children who are hungry, more working parents who cannot make ends meet despite their best efforts, and more seniors who cannot feed themselves on the little Social Security they're given.

I also write as a person of faith. How we care for the neediest among us is a moral question we cannot avoid answering — and this legislation is an opportunity to answer it with integrity and compassion.

Rhode Island faces urgent, compounding needs. The federal government has substantially cut assistance that families depend on — including SNAP benefits and Medicaid funding — even as food prices and health insurance costs continue to climb. What I witness at Good Neighbors is not abstract: it is a steady, growing tide of neighbors in crisis. If we do nothing, the price of our inaction will be paid by the most vulnerable people in our communities.

S 2238 responds to this moment with a measure that is both modest and just. It creates a 3% surtax on taxable income above \$640,000 per year — affecting only the top 1% of Rhode Island earners — making our tax formula more proportional by asking more from those most able to give. This is not a burden on working families or small businesses. It is a reasonable and moral ask of those whose extraordinary success places them in a unique position to help sustain the community that made it possible.

The moral calculation we face is not whether we can afford to care for our neighbors — it is whether we can afford not to. The measure of a just society is found in how it treats those who are struggling. I urge this Committee to advance S 2238 and to choose, on behalf of the people of Rhode Island, the more just and compassionate path.

Respectfully submitted,

Henriette Derbyshire

Member, Coalition for Social Justice Committee

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