

April 27, 2026

Subject: FOR S2820

Dear Chair and Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

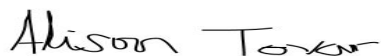
My name is Dr. Alison Tovar, and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the Brown University School of Public Health, where my work focuses on nutrition, food systems, and health equity. I write in strong support of S2820, which would establish restricted receipt accounts so that fees collected by the Department of Environmental Management from farmers remain with the Division of Agriculture to directly support Rhode Island's farming community.

A strong food system depends on a strong agricultural infrastructure. My research over the past 15 years has focused on improving dietary behaviors in communities disproportionately affected by food insecurity, and that work consistently underscores the importance of local agriculture in building healthier, more resilient communities. Yet Rhode Island's Division of Agriculture has long been under-resourced relative to the responsibilities it carries — supporting the farmers who feed our communities, steward our working landscapes, and sustain our local food economy.

S2820 is a straightforward, fiscally responsible reform. Rhode Island farmers already pay these fees; it is only common sense that those dollars be reinvested in the programs and services that support them, rather than diverted into the general fund. This bill raises no new fees and asks nothing additional of taxpayers — it simply ensures that farmer-paid dollars are used to support farmers.

Strengthening the Division of Agriculture is a meaningful step toward a more sustainable, equitable food system in Rhode Island. I respectfully urge the Committee to support S2820.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on behalf of Rhode Island agriculture.



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