April 28th, 2026

Dear Chairman DiPalma and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I'm writing on behalf of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and our members regarding **SB2820**. We strongly support this bill as a priority in addressing the food system.

The heart of the bill is a request for an "agricultural restricted receipt account" to be created. Any agricultural fees collected under authority of DEM's Division of Agriculture, would be deposited into the agricultural restricted receipt account would be used only for the authorized purposes established by the DEM Division of Agriculture with the support of an established advisory committee to assist it in determining suggested uses of the funds.

Farms provide many different types of benefits to Rhode Islanders – food security, environmental protection and climate mitigation, economic benefits in terms of business revenues and jobs. Our friends at the Land Trust Council have laid out just a few of those in their testimony. We'll highlight that Ag sector has roughly 1500 business, mostly small family businesses, 4000 jobs, revenues around $400million.

The LASA program has shown how a little state support can generate growth in the number and size of businesses as demonstrated by the Ag Census. We commend the legislature for their continued support of that program.

But WHY has it worked? Consumer demand on one side and well-established intensive farming methods on the other. So why wouldn't we build on that success by allowing the DEM to stop treating the ag sector like a cash cow and instead invest its revenues back into the sector?

Funds from this bill can be used on things like tech support in areas like lean farming, expanded grants/loans for mi-larger farms, legal support for succession and leasing, marketing/branding for RI Grown, support for farm to school and farm to institution, etc. Investments that will boost our agricultural economy.

It's time to stop treating our farms like a dying economic sector that we don't care about and instead look at it as the vibrant, growing sector that it is and support it accordingly!

Thank you for your consideration,

isaac@rifoodcouncil • 401.271.2385 • 10 Davol Square, Suite 100, Providence, RI 02903 • rifoodcouncil.org

Isaac Bearg

Program Director - Food, Climate & Environment

Rhode Island Food Policy Council