



## SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

*we help people grow food*

Chairman Louis DePalma  
Senate Finance Committee

Dear Chairman DePalma,

My name is Ben Torpey. I live in Providence and am writing in support of SB3231 on behalf of myself and Southside Community Land Trust, where I serve as Director of Programs. There is a critical need for \$17.5 Million in additional conservation funding in the FY 2027 Green Economy Bond, especially \$10 Million for conservation programs.

We are particularly supportive of the \$2 million for farmland preservation included in this bill. This funding is critical to preserving some of the last important farms in the state. RI DEM has been a great partner to SCLT and is truly a champion of RI farmers, but they currently have a backlog of farms that are in various stages of appraisal or review.

I work with many small and beginning farmers looking to expand their businesses and stay in Rhode Island. SCLT manages two shared farmland access sites in western Cranston, conserved by the state of RI, where farmers lease small amounts of land to start their businesses. However, moving farmers off these properties onto their own land has proven difficult because of a lack of affordable farmland available. Bills like SB3231 contribute to the solution by preserving remaining prime farmland.

Additionally, continued state support for farmland preservation benefits all Rhode Islanders by increasing access to local food. Funds from the State of RI Open Space and Farmland Preservation programs have been used to conserve properties that SCLT and 375 farmers and gardeners we work with now operate to provide fresh, healthy and affordable food to over 22,000 people in our state.

More preserved farmland means more healthy food for RI families, stronger small businesses, and more resilient communities. Please support SB3231.

Respectfully,

Ben Torpey  
Director of Programs  
Southside Community Land Trust