

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** Rep. Bennett, David A.  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 28, 2024 6:55 PM  
**To:** Lou Mansolillo  
**Subject:** Fwd: Testimony in support of H7563: Organic Farming and Certification Program

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**From:** George Voutes <george\_voutes@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 28, 2024 2:22:55 PM  
**To:** Rep. Bennett, David A. <rep-Bennett@rilegislature.gov>; Rep. Roberts, Sherry <rep-Roberts@rilegislature.gov>  
**Cc:** Rep. Speakman, June <rep-speakman@rilegislature.gov>; Sen. Lauria, Pamela J. <sen-lauria@rilegislature.gov>  
**Subject:** Testimony in support of H7563: Organic Farming and Certification Program

From: George Voutes, 17 Shore Road, Bristol RI 02809

To Chair Bennett and the honorable Members of the RI House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Almost all conventional store-bought vegetables and fruits have been transported over long distances within the US or even across continents, often come with an excessive amount of packaging, and have little nutritional value because they have frequently been harvested before ripeness just to survive the transport. They also come with a large carbon footprint, which is inherent in much of the conventional agricultural methods, long-distance transportation, excessive plastic packaging, and product losses (about 30%) in the supply-chain.

Locally grown, certified organic products are a much better alternative. Everyone who has bought produce from local organic farms will readily agree that the freshness, taste and overall quality of locally grown organic fruits and vegetables is by far superior to store-bought, conventional produce. And, “nothing beats local”, visiting a farmers’ market and personally knowing the farmers who grow what we eat.

In addition, organic farming has important benefits beyond the superior quality of its produce:

- it is regenerative and focuses on soil health, instead of eroding the soil through conventional agriculture (just looking at the soil of a corn field after harvest proves this point),
- there is no use of synthetic and soluble fertilizers, and consequently no pollution of our ponds, lakes and ocean from run-off,
- there is no use of synthetic pesticides and herbicides that poison the environment and endanger pollinators and other wildlife, and us humans—when we eat certified organic food, we don’t have to worry about poisoning our families with toxic residues on the food. And yet, despite the benefits they provide for their customers and the environment, many organic farms are at the limit of financial viability.

Many organic farm families worry about the long-term survival of their farms, despite all of their hard work and ingenuity. Bill H7563 provides much needed relief and support for organic farmers in Rhode Island by establishing resources and funding for an organic farming and certification program to assist in the marketing and competitiveness of Rhode Island grown organic agricultural products. The program under the bill also

provides for financial and technical assistance to support organic farmers, with the declared intent to enhance the economic viability of local organic agriculture, and to support the development of a locally based, safe and sustainable organic food system.

We need and we must support and grow local organic farming! Please bring the bill to a vote in 2024.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Roberts for introducing this important bill