

Testimony in opposition of H7563: Organic Farming and Certification Program

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: February 29, 2024

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

I **oppose** H7563, because of the requirement that the Department of Health further develop and support food safety related programs and standards pertaining to local organic agriculture (Section 2-28-2. (a) (5)).

This requirement will create additional burden for organic farmers. It is discriminatory and unnecessary, because requiring additional regulations for organic farms just because they are certified when other uncertified farms are using the same practices will open up a potential for driving organic farms out of business.

It seems that the Department of Health is intended to be the certifier because it would be a conflict of interest for the DEM to provide technical assistance to farms that they certify. When DEM surrendered the certification program, the farmers transitioned to Bay State Certifiers for their certification. There is no need to reverse that, or involve the DoH in certification.

If Section 2-28-2. (a) (5) and any references to certification would be removed, the bill would be much truer to its declared intent: “Assist in the marketing of Rhode Island grown organic agricultural products for the purpose of sale and promotion within the State of Rhode Island or United States; enhance the economic competitiveness of Rhode Island grown organic agricultural products” – without erecting further obstacles.

Please do NOT bring the bill to a vote.

Thank you very much for considering my input.



Dr. Hans Scholl

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