

Chris O'Brien

From: Dana Siles Photographer <dana@danasiles.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 10:31 AM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.
Subject: FOR HB7995: TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support of Bill HB7995, TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION.

Rhode Island's 2022 food insecurity rate was reported at 31%, 18.2% above the national average. The RI Community Food Bank reports improvement in 2023 at 29%, however, households with children under 18 saw a jump to 38%.

Meanwhile, ReFED estimates 33.2% of Rhode Island's surplus food was produced by industry sectors in 2022 (farms, foodservice, manufacturing and retail businesses), accounting for 128 million pounds of unused food. Of this, **only 7.4% was donated**, despite food donation being among the most preferred methods of avoiding waste according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Instead, 42% fed the landfill and 50.6% was sent to animal feed, compost, anaerobic digestion, etc.

In all, the equivalent of over 145.77 million meals were sent to animal feed, compost, anaerobic digestion and landfill use from industry sectors in 2022. **Moving forward, if a conceivable 10% were fit for consumption and donated as outlined by the EPA, ~14.57 million meals would boost food security for Rhode Islanders annually. This would be considered a lifeline** for the estimated 142,038 Rhode Islanders utilizing SNAP and for those who struggle to stay within their food budget, forced to choose quantity over quality of food they purchase; and/or who skip meals for their children, even for their pets.

Increased food donations will also lower food costs among RI-based organizations through the supplementation of quality excess food. Replacing food expenditures with critical investments in human service programs will propel their unique missions while stretching tax dollars.

Finally, increasing food donation of both excess *and* non-excess food is critical to make Rhode Island 100% food secure with 0% food loss, aligning with the White House National Strategy goal to end hunger by 2030 and the Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste to "reduce greenhouse gas emissions; save households and businesses money; and build cleaner, healthier communities." Food Food spoilage in RI landfills causes methane gasses, 25 times more harmful to the environment than carbon dioxide; and reducing waste will extend the life of the Central Landfill, projected to reach capacity by 2040.

I urge you to support HB7995 to **help make Rhode Island close to zero waste and total food security.**

Sincerely,
Dana Siles
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