

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** Shira Hirshberg <shirshberg@allfoodsnutrition.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2024 1:44 PM  
**To:** House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.  
**Cc:** dana@rescuingleftovercuisine.org; isaac@rifofoodcouncil.org  
**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.

In my private practice as a Registered Dietitian I see the results of food insecurity every week in my patients. I see them struggling to afford food and struggling to manage food-related medical conditions as a result like celiac disease, gestational diabetes and eating disorders.

The data backs this up- 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.

Food donation will also lessen impacts caused by food spoilage in RI landfills by reducing methane gasses, 25 times more harmful to the environment than carbon dioxide; and extend the life of the Central Landfill, projected to reach capacity by 2040.

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."

Simply put, a TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION is a...

- WIN – Provide food for people facing food & nutrition insecurity.
- WIN – Improve health equity through increased access to wholesome foods.
- WIN – Preserve the environment + better our health as a result.
- WIN – Stretch tax dollars by extending the life of landfills.
- WIN – Support Rhode Island businesses.
- WIN – Support nonprofits: more food donated = more dollars for programs.

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

Sincerely,  
Shira Hirshberg  
Providence, RI

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