



March 31, 2025

Representative Teresa Tanzi, Chair
Rhode Island House Committee on Finance, Subcommittee on Human Services
RE: Department of Human Services FY26 budget appropriation of \$550,000 to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank

Dear Chair Tanzi and members of the Subcommittee:

We appreciate the FY26 budget proposed by Governor McKee which makes an appropriation of \$550,000 for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank from the Department of Human Services. We use state funds to source and distribute food through our statewide network of 147 partner agencies. To acquire enough food to keep up with the high demand for food assistance across Rhode Island, we are requesting an increase in our FY26 allocation to \$1 million.

Currently, the Food Bank and its partner agencies are serving over 81,000 people each month. The demand for food assistance has increased by nearly 60 percent since 2020, when we were serving 51,000 people each month prior to the pandemic.

In FY25, the General Assembly allocated \$800,000 in state funding for the Food Bank in response to the high need. This allocation exceeded the Governor's proposed FY25 budget appropriation of \$550,000. We are requesting an even larger state allocation this year due to federal funding cuts that affect the Food Bank and the people we serve.

Congress is currently considering a proposal to cut SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits by 25 percent. There are 148,000 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP. If their benefits are reduced at a time when food prices remain extremely high, the need for food assistance at our partner agencies will skyrocket.

One-third of the 18 million pounds of food distributed by the Food Bank each year comes from the USDA. Recently the Trump administration reduced USDA funding for food banks nationwide, cancelling the delivery of 14 truckloads of USDA food, approximately 500,000 pounds of food, to Rhode Island.

Additional funding is critical for us to continue to provide food assistance across the state. Thank you for considering our urgent request to increase the state's appropriation from \$550,000 to \$1 million.

Sincerely,

Andrew Schiff
CEO