

Chris O'Brien

From: Dana Siles Photographer <dana@danasiles.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 12:14 PM
To: House Finance Committee; Rep. Abney, Marvin L.
Cc: Isaac Bearg; Josh Daly
Subject: FOR HB5404: TAX CREDIT FOR FOOD DONATION

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my unwavering support for [HB5404](#), the **Tax Credit for Food Donation**. Despite its previous challenges in 2023 and 2024, this bill has been meticulously refined through collaboration with legislators, the Rhode Island Division of Taxation, Rhode Island Commerce, and the Harvard Food Law & Policy Clinic. It stands as a pivotal, common-sense measure poised for enactment.

Addressing Environmental Health Risks: wasted food constitutes a significant portion of landfill content, leading to substantial environmental and health concerns. Notably, wasted food is responsible for approximately 58% of fugitive methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills. Methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide, emanates from decomposing food, polluting our air and water, and posing direct threats to public health. Alarming, methane emissions from landfilled wasted food have surged by 295% between 1990 and 2020, underscoring the urgency of this issue.

Combatting the Climate Crisis: The USDA reports that 30-40% of the U.S. food supply is wasted annually, positioning food recovery as a top-tier solution for mitigating climate change.

Alleviating Food and Nutrition Insecurity: Rhode Island's food insecurity rate has reached an unprecedented 38%, significantly surpassing the national average. This crisis exacerbates nutritional inequities, heightens risks of chronic illnesses, and imposes barriers to education and economic mobility. Notably, 70% of SNAP recipients reported that their benefits lasted two weeks or less in 2023, up from 49% in 2019, highlighting the escalating challenges faced by low-income RI households.

Supporting Businesses and the Economy: Nationally, businesses incur a staggering \$217 billion loss due to surplus food. Rhode Island's foodservice industry sent 53.5% of its surplus food to landfills in 2023—the highest waste rate among all sectors, including residential—with retail not far behind at 34.3%. Implementing surplus food prevention strategies and reducing disposal costs through compliance with the Rhode Island wasted food Ban will benefit both businesses and communities, fostering a more sustainable and efficient food system.

Empowering Local Nonprofits: On-the-ground organizations are in dire need of food donations. Increased donations translate to enhanced resources for essential programs and services, a critical necessity at a time when funding constraints pose significant challenges.

Passing [HB5404](#) is not merely a legislative action; it is a strategic investment in Rhode Island's environmental sustainability, public health, and economic vitality. This bill aligns seamlessly with Rhode Island's 2030 Food Strategy's commitment to a resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system, as well as our Climate Strategy's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. With the strategy's release imminent, the time to act is now.

While the existing organic waste ban serves as "the stick," this tax credit represents "the carrot"—a much-needed incentive for businesses to donate surplus food. Many businesses currently default to composting, unaware that the EPA ranks source reduction, food donation, and upcycling as higher priorities. Furthermore, uncertainty around liability protections and limited awareness of Rhode Island's diverse network of food recovery services often deter potential donors. This tax credit will both inform and empower food generators to take meaningful, proactive steps.

The state's investment in this initiative promises substantial returns—reducing operational costs for businesses, easing the financial strain on residents struggling to make ends meet, and strengthening Rhode Island's economic foundation. It is a strategic commitment that delivers immediate benefits while advancing long-term sustainability, resilience, and prosperity for all.

I urge you to support [HB5404](#) and help move Rhode Island closer to zero waste and full food security. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this bill further, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,
Dana Siles
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Dana Siles Photographer
401.965.4532

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