

Testimony in Support of H-5404: An Act Relating to Taxation – Tax Credit for Food Donation

Representative Marvin L. Abney, Chair
Representative Scott A. Slater, First Vice Chair
Representative Alex Marszalkowski, Second Vice Chair
House Finance Committee

Submitted by:
Kelly Lynn Bouchard

Date of Hearing:
Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am a registered dietitian and the project coordinator for a research study on early childhood nutrition at Brown University. I am writing to voice my support for the passage of H-5404.

Thirty-eight percent of Rhode Islanders faced food insecurity in 2024,¹ yet up to 40% of edible food is thrown away annually.² Ready access to safe and nutritious food should be a fundamental right, so taking legislative measures to eliminate hunger should be a top priority. Furthermore, food-insecure individuals are likely to have subpar nutrient intake, which can increase the risk of developing certain chronic diseases later in life. Helping vulnerable Rhode Islanders safely access food that would otherwise be disposed of could play a considerable role in reducing long-term healthcare costs.

As for the economic benefits of this legislation, incentivizing businesses to distribute their surplus food will cut down the amount of money that is wasted when edible food is discarded. It will also allow community organizations that distribute food to better leverage tax dollars by diverting what they would be spending on food items toward other initiatives.

Lastly, limiting food waste plays a significant role in mitigating climate change. Decaying foodstuffs emit methane, a greenhouse gas that traps more heat than CO₂. The EPA has reported that the amount of food wasted in the United States produces more emissions than 50 million gas-powered vehicles.³ Given that Rhode Island is one of the fastest warming states,⁴ this bill poses an excellent opportunity to protect local ecosystems.

H-5404 has substantial potential to benefit Rhode Islanders' physical, economic, and environmental wellness. I urge the Finance Committee to support this bill. I thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Sincerely,

Kelly Lynn Bouchard, MS, RD, LDN

Sources

1. 2024 Status Report on Hunger in Rhode Island.
https://rifoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-Status-Report_Web.pdf
2. RLC Rhode Island.
<https://www.rescuingleftovercuisine.org/rhode-island>
3. Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfilled Food Waste.
<https://www.epa.gov/land-research/quantifying-methane-emissions-landfilled-food-waste>
4. Climate Crisis Heats Up Rhode Island the Quickest.
<https://www.usgs.gov/news/climate-crisis-heats-rhode-island-quickest>