

To: House Health & Human Services Committee, Rhode Island General Assembly

From: Diane Minasian, MD

Date: 5/22/2024

RE: H-8280 To Establish a Commission to study how the State can Adopt Good Food Purchasing Standards

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Committee Members

I am a family physician with over 30 years of clinical experience within the state of Rhode Island. Throughout my career, I have worked exclusively at Community Health Centers. With a primary mission of serving marginalized and underserved populations, I have cared for women, children and men of all ages. Through direct experience, I have seen the deleterious effects that highly processed foods have had on the health of these communities. Alternatively, I have witnessed the positive impact that fresh, nutritious food has had on maintaining wellness and preventing disease.

I am writing today in strong support of Representative Kislak's proposed legislation H-8280, which will establish a commission to study how the state can adopt Good Food Purchasing standards.

Generally speaking, Good Food Purchasing practices implement a values-based approach to food procurement. This approach considers a variety of important variables. These may include factors such as the nutritional quality of food, the impact food systems have on local economies, maximizing environmental sustainability, fair treatment of workers and animal welfare.

Evidence of the dramatic impact that can occur through adopting Good Food Purchasing practices is presented in a Civil Eats article reporting on Boston's adoption of a Good Food value-based purchasing in 2019. It referred to the success of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Two years after Good Food Purchasing practices went into effect, the percentage of locally purchased fruit and vegetables served increased from 9 percent to 75 percent. The district also reduced its yearly meat spending by 15 percent, saving more than 19 million gallons of water, according to PolicyLink.

The added value of establishing such a commission will provide a pivotal point of alignment in the state. It will support the Department of Health's current work to study state institutional procurement practices. This along with the many efforts of other organizations working to make a better food system has the potential to be synergistic. It will align with the 5-year food system retrospective of RI and recommendations done by Relish Rhody's, as well as the Department of Education's Farm to School work, the Director of Food Strategy at the Commerce Corporation and the work of the Department of Environmental Management.

In closing, I enthusiastically support bill H-8280, which would establish a commission to study the potential impact of Good Food Purchasing standards on the process of food procurement in the state. By updating and transforming Rhode Island's purchasing and procurement practices there is great potential to positively impact the local economy, the environment, working conditions for food chain workers, animal welfare and the health of all our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this exciting proposal.

Sincerely,

Diane Minasian, MD

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Warren Alpert Medical School