

**RI FOOD
POLICY
COUNCIL**



House Committee on Health & Human Services
Rhode Island General Assembly

May 23, 2024

RE: HJR8280 Joint Resolution Creating a Special Joint Legislative Commission to Study, Provide Recommendations, and Oversee Implementation of Requirements for State Departments and Vendors to Adopt Good Food Purchasing Standards in the State of Rhode Island

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Committee Members,

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) writes in **support** of HJR8280, to establish a study commission on the adoption of good food purchasing (GFP) standards for state institutional procurement.

RIFPC's mission is to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island. Adopting GFP standards will support RIFPC's vision of increasing production of and demand for local food, creating a thriving and just food economy, increasing access to affordable, healthful and culturally relevant food for all residents, and supporting community health and a sustainable environment.

"Good Food" in this context is defined as food that is healthy, affordable, fair and sustainable. Adopting GFP policies would:

- Leverage State procurement dollars to increase access to fresh and healthy foods through value-driven purchasing standards
- Improve Rhode Islanders' health by ensuring State food sites incorporate fresh and healthy food
- Create opportunities for smaller farmers and food entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and thrive
- Ensure just compensation and fair treatment for food chain workers
- Support sustainable farming practices and reward good environmental stewardship

Evidence exists in other communities that have adopted GFP practices of the incredible impact that their work can have. Establishing such as this one commission will provide a pivotal point of alignment in the state, supporting Rhode Island Department of Health's current work to update its Healthy Local Procurement Guidelines, the current process to update the RI State Food Strategy ("Relish Rhody") and the Rhode Island Department of Education's ongoing efforts to promote and support Farm to School.

In closing, RIFPC reiterates our support for HJR8280. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. RIFPC is available to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Nessa Richman
Executive Director
RI Food Policy Council