



Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Chairman Marvin Abney  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney,

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council is an independent, non-profit, statewide collaboration of diverse, committed and engaged stakeholders from all sectors. We have served as the state's backbone network for the people, businesses, government agencies and community organizations that make up Rhode Island's food system since October 24, 2011. Our mission is to build a more equitable, accessible, economically vibrant, and environmentally sustainable food system in Rhode Island.

RIFPC **SUPPORTS** the Governor's FY 2024 budget as it pertains to the RI Department of Environmental Management, but **we respectfully request that you include the appropriation outlined in [House Bill 6018](#) (and [Senate companion 560](#)) that amends the budget to include \$5 Million for the preservation, protection and conservation of farmlands.** This amendment would support the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission (ALPC), which is responsible for the state's farmland protection program and which will likely run out of funds by the end of 2023.

Since 1981, the farmland protection program has leveraged millions of dollars in both federal and private funding, and has been supported through strong partnerships with land trusts (\$38 million from the state, \$67 million in contributions). The program has been traditionally funded through the voter-approved Green Bond. Last year, dedicated funding for farmland was not included in the Bond, leaving the program vulnerable and unfunded for at least another 2 years. The overwhelming increase in real estate values has placed intense development pressures on Rhode Island's remaining farms and the farmers that operate them. There is a backlog of nearly 50 farms that have been approved for protection through ALPC, and the remaining funding for this program will be spent down quickly (there is only \$1.3 million remaining in the program). *If the FY2024 budget is not amended to include funding for farmland, farms and farm businesses will disappear. Millions in federal funding for farmland protection through USDA will be left on the table – the federal programs that we work with to conserve farmland require a 50% match that we will not be able to access.*

Amending the FY2024 budget to support ALPC and the farmland protection program is a good investment. When included, the \$5 million would bring at least \$8 million into the state in matching funds and the impacts would be significant for future generations of Rhode

Island farmers. These funds will go far, fostering collaboration that is leveraged by additional federal, non-profit, and local dollars.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nessa Richman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Nessa Richman  
Network Director