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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024**

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**J O I N T   R E S O L U T I O N**

**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**

Introduced By: Representative Rebecca M. Kislak

Date Introduced: May 16, 2024

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

1           WHEREAS, Individual and collective choices regarding food purchasing and  
2 consumption affect the health, sustainability, working conditions, and economic opportunity in  
3 our communities; and

4           WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island works to improve the health of all its residents,  
5 and to promote safe, healthy and fair work environments for its workforce. The creation of a  
6 sustainable local food system supports these efforts and promotes a productive environment and  
7 animal welfare; and

8           WHEREAS, The Good Food Purchasing Program ("GFPP") was developed in 2012 to  
9 incentivize public institutions to procure Good Food produced through values-driven purchasing  
10 standards; and

11           WHEREAS, GFPP defines Good Food as food that is healthy, affordable, fair, and  
12 sustainable. Good Food is produced, processed, distributed, and recycled locally using the  
13 principles of environmental stewardship (in terms of water, soil, and pesticide management)  
14 meets the dietary guidelines for Americans, and is available to purchase for all income levels; and

15           WHEREAS, Good Food values prioritize nutrition, affordability, locality, and sustainable  
16 production practices, including sound environmental practices, fair prices for producers, safe and  
17 fair working conditions for employees, and humane conditions for animals; and

18           WHEREAS, All participants in the GFPP food supply chain receive fair compensation

1 and fair treatment and are free from exploitation; and

2 WHEREAS, Good Food Purchasing refers to the sourcing and purchasing of foods and  
3 beverages, and food and beverage service contracts, procured by state departments and agencies;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, In practicing Good Food Purchasing policies, the State of Rhode Island will  
6 help support a regional food system that is ecologically sound, economically viable and socially  
7 responsible, and has an impact on the availability of local, sustainable food; and

8 WHEREAS, It is recognized that the significant buying power of public institutions  
9 across the country can reform the food system, create opportunities for smaller farmers and low-  
10 income entrepreneurs to thrive, provide just compensation and fair treatment for food chain  
11 workers, support sustainable farming practices, reward good environmental stewardship, and  
12 increase access to fresh and healthy foods; and

13 WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island is focused on creating and building wealth in our  
14 neighborhoods and supporting small business owners and employees in addressing income  
15 inequality in our state; and

16 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention State Physical Activity and  
17 Nutrition (SPAN) Grant is a five (5) year cooperative agreement awarded to 17 states, including  
18 the Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH), and specifies a strategy dedicated to procurement  
19 in state institutions. The primary goal of the procurement strategy centers around collaborations  
20 with state agency partners to update food service guidelines, including conducting baseline  
21 assessments; and

22 WHEREAS, Under the SPAN Cooperative Agreement the Rhode Island Department of  
23 Health (RIDOH) has initiated procurement research efforts, including a thorough review of  
24 existing legislation and state purchasing practice. RIDOH plans to convene a collaborative task  
25 force including both state agencies as well as community organizations to influence statewide  
26 purchasing, incorporating key tenets of good food purchasing; and

27 WHEREAS, Relish Rhody is a state-led, interagency strategy to improve the food system  
28 in Rhode Island. In addition to the state-level leadership, the food strategy is informed by a robust  
29 network of community partners across sub-sectors who are engaged in this effort.

30 WHEREAS, The Director of Food Strategy, in partnership with leaders from the RI  
31 Commerce Corporation, the RI Department of Environmental Management, the RI Department of  
32 Health, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe along with community partners, are leading the effort  
33 to renew the state's food strategy; and

34 WHEREAS, Connecting food procurement to Rhode Island food producers through

1 Good Food Purchasing Standards by giving broad discretion to state institutions to purchase  
2 Rhode Island-produced food directly from farmers and other suppliers would support local farms  
3 and small businesses; create more jobs in food processing, manufacturing, and distribution;  
4 promote self-reliance and preservation of family farms; protect workers' rights; promote safe  
5 working conditions; and ensure fair compensation for all farm and food workers; now, therefore  
6 be it

7         RESOLVED, That a special joint legislative commission be and the same is hereby  
8 created consisting of seventeen (17) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate,  
9 not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President of the  
10 Senate; three (3) of whom shall be members of the House, not more than two (2) from the same  
11 political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be the Director of  
12 the Department of Health, or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Department of  
13 Administration, or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Department of  
14 Environmental Management, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of Relish  
15 Rhode Island, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of the Southside  
16 Community Land Trust, or designee; one of whom shall be Executive Director of Farm Fresh  
17 Rhode Island, or designee; one of whom shall be the Food Strategy Project Manager of the Rhode  
18 Island Commerce Corporation, or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode  
19 Island Department of Education Farm to School Program, or designee; one of whom shall be the  
20 Executive Director of Farm to Institution New England, or designee; one of whom shall be a  
21 representative of the animal welfare industry, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and  
22 one of whom shall be a representative from the food chain workers industry, to be appointed by  
23 the President of the Senate.

24         In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study  
25 commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing  
26 authority shall appoint two (2) members of the general public.

27         The purpose of said commission shall include, but not be limited to, studying current  
28 procurement of food within the State and how Good Food Purchasing standards can be adopted.

29         In order to leverage State of Rhode Island purchasing and procurement to improve public  
30 health, sustainability, fair working conditions, and local opportunity across the State of Rhode  
31 Island, the State should embrace a Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) as a strategy to help  
32 improve our region's food system through the adoption and implementation of Good Food  
33 Purchasing Standards, which emphasize values that would:

34         1. Support small and mid-sized agricultural and food processing operations within the

1 local area or region;

2 2. Support producers that employ sustainable production systems that reduce or eliminate  
3 synthetic pesticides and fertilizers; avoid the use of hormones, antibiotics, and genetic  
4 engineering; conserve soil and water; protect and enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity; and  
5 reduce on-farm energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;

6 3. Protect workers' rights to freedom of association, to organize a union and collectively  
7 bargain in order to better ensure safe and healthy working conditions, fair compensation, and  
8 access to health insurance and affordable child care for all food chain workers;

9 4. Ensure farmers a fair price for their products that covers the cost of production and fair  
10 remuneration for their management and labor;

11 5. Provide healthy and humane care for farm animals; and

12 6. Promote health and well-being by offering generous portions of vegetables, fruit, and  
13 whole grains; reducing salt, added sugars, fats, and oils; and by eliminating artificial additives.

14 Additionally, in support of state equity the following considerations in the Commission's  
15 study should include how adopting a Good Food Purchasing Program will address ongoing  
16 inequities and issues caused by unequal access to resources, including methods to encourage  
17 prospective food vendors to invest in our disadvantaged and minority communities through  
18 language/requirements in procurement requests preferences for prospective vendors who:

- 19 • Demonstrate a track record of hiring and investing in local disadvantaged  
20 communities;
- 21 • Provide living wages to all their employees, including frontline food workers;
- 22 • Are local minority, disabled, and/or women-owned businesses; and
- 23 • Are local producers and processors operating in low-income communities and  
24 employing non-toxic, environmentally sustainable methods.

25 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
26 the call of the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and organize and shall select  
27 from among the legislators, co-chairpersons.

28 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

29 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

30 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
31 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
32 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

33 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
34 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That the Commission shall submit an interim report to the Executive Office  
2 of Health and Human Services no later than December 15, 2024, and its final report to the  
3 Executive Office of Health and Human Services no later than February 15, 2025. Following  
4 submission of the final report, the Commission shall continue to meet to monitor and support the  
5 implementation of these recommendations and shall expire on February 15, 2026.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

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1           This resolution would create a seventeen (17) member special joint legislative  
2 commission whose purpose it would be to study, provide recommendations and oversee the  
3 implementation of Good Food Purchasing Standards in Rhode Island, and who would provide an  
4 interim report to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services no later than December 15,  
5 2024, a final report by February 15, 2025, and expire on February 15, 2026.

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