

Hunger and Food Insecurity in RI

- Approximately 1 in 8 Rhode Island households is food insecure, meaning that they are unable to afford adequate and nutritious food for themselves and their families.
- Food insecurity in children has been linked to a range of negative health, behavioral, academic, and psycho-social outcomes resulting in significant costs to the individual and the community.
- The numbers of people seeking assistance at the food bank continues to increase as does the amount of food being distributed. Nonetheless, the numbers of people experiencing hunger and food insecurity is also increasing. RI has the highest rate of food insecurity (13% of all households) in New England.
- Twenty nine percent (29%) of people getting food from the Food Bank network of pantries and soup kitchens who are not on the Food Stamp Program are likely eligible based on their incomes
- Approximately 60,000 Rhode Islanders are eligible for, but not participating in, the federal Food Stamp Program.

One RI Proposal:

Invest \$150,000 to support statewide food stamp outreach efforts.

To increase participation in the Food Stamp Program, the federal government currently contributes matching funds for every dollar spent by a state agency on outreach efforts. Participation in the Food Stamp program has been shown to increase the quantity and quality of food purchased by low-income families.

Increased spending on food through local markets can increase economic activity by creating jobs and strengthening public revenues. Federally funded programs provide a direct economic stimulus for the state and business community. The USDA suggests an investment in Food Stamps yields a multiplier effect of 1.84. This means that for every Food Stamp dollar spent, an additional \$0.84 is generated in economic activity.

Based on the current average monthly payment of \$81 per individual, an increased enrollment in the program by 10% (8,000 individuals), would bring close to \$7.8 million in federal food stamp dollars into Rhode Island. Further, using the 1.84 multiplier effect, a 10% increase in Food Stamp participation would result in close to \$14 million in economic activity.