

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 103

Approved March 23, 2016

WHEREAS, The food processing, packaging, and sales cluster of the local economy added nearly 800 new jobs between 2009 and 2013, representing 24% job growth; and

WHEREAS, National trends toward locally sourced food products, non-genetically modified foods, and organic food products have led to many economic benefits for local farms and agriculture related businesses; and

WHEREAS, The 2015 update to “The Economic Impact of Rhode Island Plant-Based Industries and Agriculture” estimates annual sales at \$238.9 million, supporting 2,563 jobs in our state; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Rhode Island has the largest percentage of new farmers in the nation, the total number of local farms is increasing, and the fastest growth has occurred among small farms of nine acres or less; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island has the second-highest concentration of certified organic operations in the nation and has more than twice the national average of certified organic farms; and

WHEREAS, Organic farmers in the US produce more value-added products (15.6%) than the average U.S. farm (4.5%); and

WHEREAS, Food-based businesses, such as co-packing, refrigeration, and distribution services, play to the production strengths of our community, provide jobs for local residents, and provide a new domestic and international export products; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island is one of only a handful of states accredited by the federal government to run an organic certification program; and

WHEREAS, According to the Economic Development Cluster Strategy report commissioned by the City Council in 2015, Providence has a unique comparative advantage in the food sector of the economy and the ability to certify products and producers as organic is critical to supporting Rhode Island’s growing food sector; and

WHEREAS, However, due to budget cuts at the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the Rhode Island Organic Certification Program is now in jeopardy and a recent audit by the USDA raised concerns about the current staffing level of the program; and

WHEREAS, Without the State-run organic certification program, many local small farmers will face great economic hardship and will have to hire expensive private firms from out of state to certify their products as organic, cutting into their bottom-lines and increasing food prices; and

WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Organic Certification Program should be preserved, promoted, and expanded to attract new food-based businesses and middle-class jobs to our state.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence hereby urges and respectfully requests that the Rhode Island Organic Certification Program be preserved and provided with the necessary staffing and budgetary resources to continue its important mission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, upon passage, copies of the resolution be sent to the Governor, the Director of the Department of Environmental Management, the President of the Commerce Corporation, and the entire Providence delegation of the General Assembly.

IN CITY COUNCIL

MAR 17 2016

READ AND PASSED



PRES.



CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE



Mayor

Date: 3/23/16