

**May 21, 2025**

**House Finance Committee Hearing Testimony**

**H-5405 Support**

**H-5467 Support**

**H-5468 Support**

**H-5470 Support**

**H-6020 Support**

**Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Finance Committee,**

**My name is Jean Ann Guliano and I'm from East Greenwich.**

**On your agenda, today, there are several bills addressing the short term and long term funding issues facing RIPTA. While I certainly urge you to support the short term funding bill (H6020), I am equally concerned about long term funding.**

**As a long time advocate for disabled individuals in Rhode Island, I am personally motivated to do so as the mother of an amazing 28-year-old young man with autism. James works part time at CVS, has his own apartment, writes his own rent checks and uses RIPTA to get to work, the store, the mall, the movies and everywhere he needs to go. Learning to ride the bus has been a game changer for James. It has given him a sense of pride, confidence and independence. As you hear from many adults with disabilities, it is a lifeline. It's freedom. It is just as essential as food, clothing and housing.**

**Last year, RIPTA placed bus 16 (James' bus) on the chopping block due to budget shortfalls and we were devastated. We contacted our Town Council President and Town Manager and they quickly sprung into action to contact RIPTA about the importance of this route. You see, it didn't just impact James. Many seniors, other adults with disabilities, students and downtown East Greenwich residents rely on this bus. Fortunately, Bus 16 is back for now, but we don't know for how long.**

**I'm 65. I'd like to live a long life and to always be here for James, but there are no guarantees in life. Now and in the future, I want to make sure he always has a**

way to get around to where he needs to go, especially to work and to the store. His health and well-being truly depends on the health and well-being of RIPTA.

So, why come to the General Assembly? Because the people of this state genuinely care about public transit and you are their voice. We also realize that public transit is not a self funded operation. The majority of funding in Rhode Island and across the country comes from state and local government. In RI it's always been through gas and highway taxes. That is until Covid hit. Not only did ridership fall, but we relied on additional federal dollars to fill the funding gaps. Now we have to fill those gaps again (even though we are slowly seeing ridership increasing) and the bills presented (H5467, H5468, H5405) make good sense towards that goal. A larger percentage share of the gas tax will help sustain RIPTA into the future. Not just for James, but for everyone for whom RIPTA is not a convenience, but a necessity.

Thank you for your consideration on these essential bills and thank you for your service to our state.

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