

Dear Chair Abney and honorable members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Cedric Ye, I live in Providence, and I am a 16 year old high school student at the Providence Country Day School. **I am writing in strong support of Rep. Stewart's H5467**, which would allocate 30% of the gas tax to RIPTA as originally designed.

I use RIPTA to go to and from school almost every day, which has given me an enormous amount of flexibility and independence that has enabled my parents to sell one of their cars, and me to choose not to get a driver's license. Without RIPTA, we would have to spend an additional \$12,000 a year for a new car, not including driver's Ed, license tests, and teenage driver insurance premiums. This is a staggeringly high financial burden that many Rhode Island families simply cannot afford. In packed service cut hearings last year, **I listened to speaker after speaker, from Pawtucket, to Newport, to Foster, discuss how proposed service cuts would cause them to lose their jobs.** The General Assembly's historic \$15M investment in RIPTA last year prevented this, and we cannot afford to let RIPTA collapse in such uncertain times where lower income households are already threatened with unprecedented cuts to SNAP, medicaid, and other federal programs.

The largest portion of RIPTA's budget comes from its share of the gas tax, which isn't indexed to inflation; this has been running RIPTA into the ground, as RIPTA's budget has grown at a rate 30% smaller than the state's overall revenue. This bill would solve this problem by finally giving RIPTA the funding it was supposed to be getting all along. I understand that the only opposition to this bill is RIPTA's board chair, Peter Alviti, but **RIDOT's budget has grown twice as fast year-over-year over RIPTA's.** RIDOT is poised to receive additional funding from the legalization of truck tolling anyways, and could thus easily give RIPTA its fair share of the gas tax. However, **this disparity is completely inequitable nonetheless;** with 55% of RIPTA riders making under \$15,000 a year, it's challenging to view the status quo as anything but the General Assembly prioritizing some people over others.

I urge you to please pass H5467. Every Rhode Islander deserves to be able to access jobs, education, and essential services, regardless of whether they can enough to afford a car, and ensuring that RIPTA finally gets its fair share of the gas tax is a badly needed, common-sense step that will help ensure everyone, not just drivers, can get where they need to go.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Cedric Ye

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