



May 20, 2025

The Honorable, Marvin L. Abney, Chair

House Finance Committee

Rhode Island Statehouse

Providence, 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 5470: AN ACT RELATING TO CAPITAL  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM -- 2026 BOND REFERENDA**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our support for **House Bill 5470**, recognizing the essential role that public infrastructure—particularly accessible and reliable public transit—plays in building strong, equitable communities. Through our **Invest United** initiative, we are committed to promoting sustainable investments that increase economic mobility, improve workforce access, reduce environmental burden, and connect Rhode Islanders to the services they need to thrive.

**House Bill 5470**—including a \$100 million capital bond referendum—represents a forward-thinking investment in Rhode Island’s infrastructure. This investment will strengthen and expand our public transit systems, ensuring they remain a dependable lifeline for working families, students, seniors, and individuals without access to private transportation. Access to transit is not a luxury—but a necessity for equitable access to employment, healthcare, education, and civic participation.

The bond funding included in House Bill 5470 will allow RIPTA to upgrade facilities, purchase cleaner and more efficient buses, and expand services to underserved areas—all are essential to creating a resilient and inclusive transportation system.

According to the **American Public Transportation Association**, every \$1 invested in public transit generates **\$5 in economic returns**, while also significantly reducing household transportation costs and boosting job access for low-income residents (APTA, 2023). This is especially critical in Rhode Island, where many of our nonprofit and workforce partners report

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

transportation as a top barrier to employment, healthcare access, and educational opportunity.

A strengthened transit system also benefits the nonprofit sector by allowing staff, clients, and community members to access programs and services more efficiently. As we face challenges such as rising costs, workforce shortages, and regional disparities, this investment enhances our collective capacity to respond to the changing needs of the community.

A thriving nonprofit sector and a resilient state are only possible when our infrastructure supports opportunity and inclusion. **House Bill 5470** ensures that public transit systems like RIPTA receive the resources needed to serve all Rhode Islanders—especially those most reliant on equitable, affordable access to transportation. We urge you to support this capital investment to sustain and grow this vital infrastructure, ensuring that our state remains connected, mobile, and prepared for the future. United Way of Rhode Island looks forward to continued collaboration in building a stronger, more connected state where every resident can thrive.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island