

Dear Chairman Abney and Committee members,

My name is Daniel Borden, I live in Tiverton, and I am here/writing in support of Rep. Alzate's bill H6020. The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) is facing a deficit of \$32.6 million dollars, this deficit is caused from years of underfunding and undervaluing our vital transit system that Rhode Islanders need. I am a college student who commutes on 4 RIPTA buses round-trip which takes up to 5 hours. On a regular basis I take the 24L, 64, 66, and 60 routes to commute to and from school. When commuting to work, I take the 24L, 60, and sometimes the 63-bus route. I am going to college to go into scientific instrumentation for space telescopes.

As a low-income college student who has experienced multiple life changing challenges, it has been difficult to complete an undergraduate degree program in the usual 4 year time span. Unfortunately, I have used up the life-time limit of Pell Grant and currently have more than \$50,000 in student loan debt. Due to complications, I am unable to get alternative loans beyond the government subsidized and unsubsidized loans. I fall in between the cracks of the system meant to help me as every additional financial aid option in Rhode Island is either for students who just graduated high school or for students who still have Pell Grant eligibility. I am forced to pay for my college degree. I was forced to leave URI as I owe over \$12000 out of pocket and was forced to change my degree back at CCRI to obtain a higher paying job to pay for the rest of my 4-year degree down the road.

With the potential cuts to RIPTA, it will destroy my life. For me to afford a car, it would take a year which in the meantime I would be forced to pay back student loans. Right now, I would have to pay almost \$600 per month on loans which I can't afford to do so. With the unfortunate issues going on in this country nationally, the costs would continue to rise, and it would more likely take almost 2 years to afford to purchase a used affordable car. I want to go into the space industry but something simple as public transportation is a lifeboat for me to get to my destination. Cutting RIPTA service would additionally create ghost bus stops as reduced service on different routes will create a backlog of people waiting to get on at the beginning of the route and people waiting to get on along the route would see the bus go by but with a full bus sign.

Not only do I support Rep. Alzate's bill H6020, I support all the bills that need to be created to help students that fall in between the cracks of the system meant to help them. The current

financial aid from the state doesn't help people like me that are low income but don't qualify for Pell Grant and are adult learners and not just out of high school.

Tens of thousands of Rhode Island residents and visitors rely on RIPTA to get where they need to go. Left unaddressed, the cuts to service and economic impacts would be catastrophic. Not only would hundreds of good paying union jobs be lost, countless of working-class people who rely on RIPTA would be forced to use expensive alternate means or just lose their jobs or be unable to access essential services entirely. We don't shut down highways when money to fix them is tight, we shouldn't slash public transportation either. Without the necessary funds to address RIPTA's \$32.6M budget shortfall in 2026, the essential services it provides—such as access to employment, healthcare, and education—will be at risk.

This funding shortfall could lead to service cuts, fare hikes, or reduced operational hours, disproportionately affecting low-income communities and individuals who rely on public transit to live their daily lives. Ensuring that RIPTA's deficit is addressed is not just a matter of supporting an agency, it is a matter of supporting the people of Rhode Island and their ability to thrive.

I urge you to support H6020, to give public transit and the riders who rely on RIPTA a fighting chance, averting a financial catastrophe that would result in massive job losses and an economic death spiral for some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,

Daniel Borden

23 Clair Ave.

Tiverton RI, 02878

Learn more about the Save RIPTA Package at our website: <https://pvdstreets.org/save-ripta/>