



May 20, 2025

The Honorable, Marvin L. Abney, Chair

House Finance Committee

Rhode Island Statehouse

Providence, 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 6020 - JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING AN
APPROPRIATION OF \$32,594,799 TO THE RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 6020. We recognize 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 6020, which proposes an appropriation of \$32,594,799 to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), represents a necessary investment in the day-to-day operations of our state's transit system. This funding will ensure that RIPTA remains 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.

At a time when Rhode Island employers across sectors are facing workforce shortages, we must eliminate the barriers that keep people from participating in the labor force. For too many Rhode Islanders, especially those in low-income communities, the absence of reliable and consistent transportation prevents them from securing and retaining jobs. Our nonprofit and workforce development partners consistently name transportation as one of the top structural barriers to economic stability.

According to the American Public Transportation Association, every \$1 invested in public

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

transit yields approximately \$5 in economic returns, while also reducing household transportation costs and increasing access to employment for low-income residents (APTA, 2023). By supporting RIPTA operations through this appropriation, House Bill 6020 helps Rhode Island build a more resilient and inclusive economy—one where people can get to work, employers can access talent, and communities can thrive.

A strengthened transit system benefits the nonprofit sector by allowing staff, volunteers, and clients to access programs and services more efficiently. As we confront challenges related to affordability, housing insecurity, and regional disparities, investments like this are essential for keeping our communities connected and supported.

A thriving nonprofit sector, a strong workforce, and a resilient state can only be achieved when our infrastructure fosters opportunity and inclusion. House Bill 6020 guarantees that RIPTA has the necessary resources to serve all Rhode Islanders, particularly those who rely heavily on equitable and affordable transportation. We urge you to support this crucial investment in our shared mobility future. United Way of Rhode Island looks forward to ongoing collaboration to build a stronger, more connected state where every resident has the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,

Ellijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island