

Dear Committee Members,

I have been conducting large scale evaluations in Rhode Island for a long time in partnership with DHS, the CAP agencies, Rhode Island Foundation, United Way of RI and many others. In every conversation and survey with community members over the 18 years I have been conducting them, the number one barrier cited to employment, education, eating healthy, and access to health and mental health care is transportation. I will never forget the mom who relied on spotty bus service to get her child to day care and then to her full time job, and all over again in the evening, who said "people don't understand, taking the bus is a part time job." But she was happy she had even the spotty service to keep her job. If you care about people being able to become skilled, employed and self sufficient, if you want to continue to draw companies and good paying jobs to Rhode Island, transportation should be a priority for increased investment and certainly not cut. If you want to bring ER visits and chronic health costs down and address child mental health and diabetes, transportation is the key.

Please do not cut RIPTA funding at all - it will be a disaster, and you will be left with the fall out after it is too late. It would actually be very wise to switch course and increase RIPTA spending and continue to innovate in how you think about delivering great transportation to Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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