



May 21, 2025

Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H-6020 – Making an Appropriation of \$32,594,799 million to Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

The Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) is writing today in support of H-6020. H-6020 would appropriate \$32.6 million to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to close a deficit that would result in the loss of crucial transit services to thousands of Rhode Islanders.

HNRI's mission is to increase the supply of safe, healthy, affordable homes in thriving communities across Rhode Island. Our 20 nonprofit community development members build, operate, and steward affordable homes for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders. We also serve as the backbone organization for Homes RI, a coalition of 80+ organizations working together to advance our shared vision of housing affordability and access. Housing and transit are intrinsically related, and we are a member of the Save RIPTA Coalition.

Just like safe, healthy, affordable homes, reliable, accessible and affordable public transportation is critical infrastructure that supports economic mobility and strong communities. Our members develop and manage homes in nearly every corner of the state, including areas where residents rely on public transit to get to jobs, schools, healthcare, stores, and other daily activities. The residents who live in our members' rental developments are diverse – many are older adults, people with disabilities, workers in low-wage occupations, and families with children, who need and benefit from reliable public transit.

Without immediate and sustained investment, RIPTA is facing devastating service cuts that would exacerbate systems inequities and undermine housing stability. Cuts to transit services are likely to increase transportation costs for housing-cost burdened households, who may have to shift to using more expensive rideshare services or more frequent driving to cover gaps left by decreased RIPTA service. Older adults or disabled residents who don't drive or don't have access to their own car are more likely to be isolated.

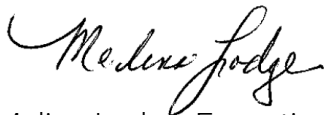
Importantly, transit access is a key component of modern and sustainable housing development – many funding sources and planning processes prioritize proximity to transit, and this has been reinforced in several recent pieces of housing legislation championed by General Assembly leadership, including legislation designed to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD), as well as the State's *Housing 2030 Plan*, which also emphasizes development around transit centers. The

long-term impacts of undermining RIPTA will jeopardize the quality of life of Rhode Islanders as well as the future of sustainable and equitable housing development in our state.

We urge the General Assembly to act to ensure that RIPTA has the resources it needs to maintain and improve its service. A well-funded public transit system supports housing development and affordability, reduces transportation and emissions, and helps communities thrive. We appreciate the leadership of Representative Alzate and the bill cosponsors for this important legislation and reiterate our support for H-6020, and the Committee for your thoughtful deliberation to ensure a more connected and thriving state.

Please feel free to reach me at mlodge@housingnetworkri.org or (401) 721-5680 x 104 for any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Melina Lodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melina Lodge, Executive Director