

Dear House Committee on Finance,

I am writing in support of House Bill 6020.

I have been a resident of Providence for 4 years. I made the personal decision to refuse to get a car not only because of the financial cost associated with it but, primarily, due to the significant negative impact that having a car causes to the environment. The funds allocated to RIPTA that this bill is proposing would be essential in making sure our public transportation system continues to operate and allow other Rhode Islanders like myself to get to our homes, families, jobs, grocery stores, medical appointments, among many essential things, including to legislative hearings such as this one.

Without this funding, RIPTA would face serious operational cuts. We would lose drivers and frequency of bus routes, which would have a huge impact in the lives of many Rhode Islanders, including myself. So far, I do not have any significant complaints about RIPTA, other than the delays and absences I have experienced from the buses. This would only become exacerbated if RIPTA is not given this funding.

We cannot continue to be a society so reliant in cars. It is terrible city planning and much worse planning towards our future. Not having a strong public transportation infrastructure would force people to continue getting in debts to purchase vehicles that overcrowd our roads and pollute our environment, regardless of the type of power they utilize. This would add to the economic crisis we are currently experiencing, mainly affecting our low income migrant communities and communities of color.

I remember 3 years ago when the state launched the initiative to have the R-Line free for a year. This brought me so much joy and hope for the future and progress of our state. At the time, I lived along North Main Street and I was able to easily go to the grocery store, work, and even to my bachata and salsa classes without having to be burdened by the cost of transportation. I believe we pay enough in state taxes to fund public transportation. Combined with taxes from ride-share services, fossil fuels, and other non-public transportation associated costs, we should be able to fund not only the infrastructure to sustain RIPTA but also to ensure that it is free of additional cost for all. It is a shame that we are even having to advocate to save such an essential resource like RIPTA. It is like if we had to advocate to save running water or electricity, but that is a privilege that people who drive don't have to think about.

Please, I urge you to allocate this funding to RIPTA, to support legislations that would make it free of cost, and to take the bus at least once or twice per month if you don't already do so. Taking public transportation is a communal experience and a reminder of what our collective efforts can achieve, which is the main reason why you are sitting where you are. One of my proudest moments was during the interview for my current job where they asked me, "if you could be a car, what kind of car would you be?" and I said "I would be a RIPTA bus because it is all about community and environmental sustainability".

I appreciate your support towards House Bill 6020.

Thanks,

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