

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is William, I live in Warwick, and I am writing in strong support of Representative Alzate's bill H6020, which allocates \$32.6 million to address the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority's (RIPTA) budget deficit. RIPTA is currently facing a critical deficit of \$32.6 million dollars. This financial challenge is not a sudden occurrence but rather the result of years of underfunding and undervaluing a transit system that is absolutely vital to so many Rhode Islanders.

As a resident of Warwick who works in Providence, RIPTA is an indispensable part of my daily life. I rely on RIPTA almost every day to commute to my job, and it has consistently proven to be a reliable and efficient way to travel between our cities. Beyond my personal commute, RIPTA plays a significant role in my family's ability to affordably navigate our state. Whether it's for appointments, errands, or leisure, RIPTA provides an accessible transportation option that helps us manage our household budget effectively. Furthermore, choosing public transit is a conscious decision to support a more sustainable Rhode Island. By riding RIPTA, my family and I contribute to reducing traffic congestion and lowering carbon emissions, which benefits our environment and the health of our communities. For my family, and countless others, RIPTA is not just a bus service; it's a lifeline that connects us to work, essential services, and opportunities throughout the state. Sustaining RIPTA means investing in the economic well-being of Rhode Island families and the environmental health of our shared home.

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, but countless working-class people who rely on RIPTA would also be forced to use expensive alternate means, or they might lose their jobs or be unable to access essential services entirely. 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,

William Masse

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