

Testimony on House Bill 6020

Joint Resolution Making An Appropriation of \$32,594,799 to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

May 21, 2025

Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Zachary Gauthier. I am writing to you today to emphatically advocate for the critical passage of House Resolution 6020.

As someone who cannot drive, RIPTA is not simply a mode of transportation; it is the indispensable thread that connects me to every facet of life in my community. It is how I access everyday necessities, manage my advocacy work, and, most importantly, connect with my neighbors, family and friends. Without the reliable services of RIPTA, I would be confined to my home, facing profound isolation and the inability to participate in the very fabric of our community. The activities that bring purpose and connection to my life – from essential errands to vital social engagements – would become completely inaccessible.

The current \$32.6 million deficit facing RIPTA, a direct result of years of under funding, poses an existential threat to this lifeline for countless individuals like myself. The potential service cuts and the layoff of over 300 dedicated RIPTA workers will not only disrupt lives; they will sever essential connections and condemn vulnerable residents, like myself, to isolation. Investing in House Resolution 6020 and ensuring sustainable funding for RIPTA is not just about maintaining a transportation system; it is about upholding the fundamental right of individuals to access everyday life, participate in their communities, and avoid the devastating consequences of isolation.

I urge you to recognize the profound and far-reaching impact of RIPTA on the lives of those who rely on it most. Supporting House Resolution 6020 is an act of compassion, a commitment to equity, and a vital investment in the well-being of our entire community. Thank you for your time and your serious consideration of this crucial matter.

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