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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say UNION YES.

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 7127 - Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Dear Chair Abney and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, representing more than 80,000 union members and their families across the state, I write in support of the Governor's FY2027 budget proposal to fund the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). Additionally, I urge the Committee to support the restoration of five million dollars to return RIPTA's budget to its September 2025 funding levels.

Access to reliable public transportation is a public necessity for Rhode Island's workforce and its economy. Every day, thousands of Rhode Islanders rely on RIPTA to get to work, school, appointments, and local businesses throughout their community. For many workers, particularly those in the service industry, healthcare, and hospitality relying on public transit is not optional. It is the only reliable way to commute to work.

Public transit is also essential to Rhode Island's local economy. Riders rely on RIPTA to travel to stores, restaurants, and other businesses, helping drive consumer activity in communities across the state. Reductions in service make it harder for workers to reach job sites and harder for businesses to attract employees and customers.

At the same time, RIPTA provides stable, family-sustaining jobs for hardworking transit operators, mechanics, and staff who keep the system running safely and efficiently every day. These workers provide an essential public service and deserve a transit system that is adequately funded and supported.

There are several options that have been presented by the Save RIPTA Coalition that would create sustainable funding sources for RIPTA. One that I believe should be prioritized is:

- House Bill No. 8256 introduced by Representative Alzate, which allocates five million dollars to RIPTA to restore the service cuts from Fall 2025.

As a result of those devastating cuts, service has been impacted across the state, especially weekend and evening routes. Riders are waiting longer for buses, being forced to find alternatives, more costly modes of transportation, and many have no choice but to travel further distances to take different buses. Transit workers are also feeling the impact. Drivers are hearing the frustrations directly from riders, and they are experiencing firsthand the difficulty of decreased runs and shorter recovery times which have impacted their own schedules and rest times.



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For many Rhode Islanders, public transportation is not simply a convenience; it's a critical piece of our economic infrastructure. By increasing funding to RIPTA we can ensure the system thrives for both riders and our dedicated transit workers and the proud members of Local 618 Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) and Local 808 Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA). For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges the committee to support funding RIPTA.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Erica A. Hammond'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Erica A. Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO