

Testimony on Governor's FY 2027, FY 2026 Revised and Capital Budgets

March 10, 2026

Chairperson Cortvriend and members of the Subcommittee on Environment & Transportation:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Governor's proposed FY 2027 budget. While there are commendable initiatives aimed at addressing the rising cost of living for Rhode Islanders, I am writing to express significant concerns regarding the long-term sustainability and adequacy of funding for our state's public transit and housing infrastructure.

Public Transit and RIPTA

As a regular rider of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) since 2016, I have seen firsthand how essential these services are for residents to access employment, healthcare, and education. While the Governor's budget addresses a portion of the current deficit, it does not provide the robust, multi-year funding necessary to restore the service cuts implemented in late 2025.

- **Ridership Impact:** Recent reports indicate a sharp decline in ridership following the 15% reduction in service. Many routes, including those in Warwick and Providence, now face longer wait times and weekend cancellations that strand workers and students.
- **Economic Stability:** Transit is an economic engine. When service is "right-sized" into obsolescence, we lose the very workforce that sustains our local economy. I urge the General Assembly to consider the 2026 Save RIPTA Legislative Package, specifically the allocation of 20% of the Highway Maintenance Account and the reallocation of rideshare sales tax to ensure RIPTA can return to—and exceed—pre-2025 service levels.

Housing and Affordability

The \$120 million investment in housing and homeownership is a positive step toward addressing our state's supply crisis. However, with rising homelessness and a limited supply of truly affordable homes, these funds must be deployed with urgency and transparency.

- **Support for Vulnerable Residents:** I support the inclusion of funding for housing and eviction defense, but we must ensure that these resources reach the community-based organizations on the front lines, such as those working in the "Housing Network of Rhode Island."
- **Child Tax Credit:** The proposal for a fully refundable state Child Tax Credit is a vital tool for families struggling with inflationary pressures. This \$325-per-child credit will provide immediate relief to those who need it most.

Revenue and Fiscal Policy

The introduction of a fourth personal income tax bracket for earners over \$1 million is a fair and necessary measure to ensure that our state can continue to fund essential human services. This progressive revenue initiative, combined with the phase-out of the tax on Social Security benefits, creates a more balanced fiscal environment for both young families and our elderly population.

Rhode Island is at a crossroads. We cannot build a prosperous future while our transit system is in crisis and our neighbors remain unhoused. I urge this committee to prioritize reliable, expanded funding for RIPTA and to maintain the historic investments in housing and family tax relief.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of Rhode Island.

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