

Dear Chair Cortvriend, and all honorable members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Shawn Fennell. I live in the Federal Hill neighborhood of Providence. I'm writing to you in support of Bill H7127. I encourage you to support this bill as well, which would reverse the unconscionable service cuts imposed upon RIPTA and restore proper funding for this crucial resource, the public transportation system that connects constituents across our beautiful state.

For most of my life, I have contended with psychological issues which have prevented me from driving. In most of the places I lived during that time, I found that this inability prevented me from exercising full autonomy--in a way, it prevented me from feeling like a fully realized person. Although some of that is unavoidable due to the nature of the transportation infrastructure of the US at large, I found a home in Rhode Island due in no small part to the way that RIPTA enabled me to live more fully than I had lived in other places: there was a line that took me to the grocery store! I could apply for jobs that were farther than three miles away, because there was a line that could get me there!

While I have since gained the capacity to drive, I nevertheless still lean upon RIPTA whenever possible for less time-sensitive travel. This allows me to save money on gas--which is, ever increasingly, a prohibitive expense. It also allows me to do my part to slow the climate and ecological changes which are being advanced by our collective use of fossil fuels. In short, RIPTA is important to me.

As a transit rider and supporter, I am relying on you to support this bill which provides level funding for RIPTA at its current reduced size, and implore you to support increased funding to reverse the devastating service cuts in 2025. High quality public transportation in Rhode Island should be a no-brainer, with our compact size and abundance of destinations, getting around the state by bus is something everyone should be able to do, and an obvious investment in a public good. Instead, we continue to return to the State House to implore you to maintain the bare minimum funding to keep the system afloat. It's time to turn this vicious cycle into a virtuous one.

A recent report from the American Public Transit Authority confirmed what most of us already know: for every \$1 billion invested in public transportation, \$5 billion is generated in

long-term economic value and supports jobs nationwide. That job support works out to \$3.1 billion in earned wages for every \$1 billion invested in public transit, according to the report. I encourage you to read the report: <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-of-Public-Transportation-022026.pdf>

I urge you to support the funding for RIPTA in the Governor's Budget, H7127 and to advocate for the restoration of funding that resulted in devastating service cuts this fall. Fully funding RIPTA is an investment that will give many returns: working class Rhode Islanders access to reliable and affordable transportation, economic growth and access to jobs and services, reduction in carbon emissions and traffic on the road, and so many more. Please support this investment to get Rhode Island back on track to create a 21st century transit system that works for everyone.

I urge you to support H7127 and increased funding for RIPTA.

Sincerely,
Shawn Fennell
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