

Testimony in Support of the Joint Resolution Appropriating \$5,000,000 to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

My name is Evan Andrews. I am the founder of Milkshake Cooperative Co., an affordable housing cooperative based in Providence, and the founder of Solari Microgrids, a company focused on delivering clean, affordable energy infrastructure.

I am writing in strong support of this resolution to provide \$5,000,000 in funding to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority.

Public transit is not simply a social service—it is **economic** infrastructure. A reliable and convenient transit system expands access to labor, reduces transportation costs for households, and increases state economic productivity. When transit service is cut or degraded, the impact is immediate: workers struggle to reach jobs, employers lose access to labor, and household financial stability deteriorates.

This is especially critical for low- and moderate-income Rhode Islanders. Through my work in cooperative housing, I see firsthand how transportation costs can rival or exceed housing costs for many households. For these residents, **transit is not optional**—it is the only viable means of accessing employment, education, and essential services. When service is reduced, the burden does not disappear; it cripples families and deteriorates our state's economy.

From an energy and infrastructure perspective, the efficiency of public transit is also undeniable. **A single bus can replace 30 or more private vehicles on the road.** That translates directly into reduced fuel consumption, lower congestion, and decreased wear on public infrastructure. We are at the beginning of a fuel crisis thanks to Israel's and America's subsequent attacks on Iran, closing the Strait of Hormuz—we have yet to experience the true effects of increasing gas prices; maintaining and strengthening public transit becomes a matter of economic resilience. **Rising fuel costs disproportionately impact lower-income households**, making access to cost-effective transit even more essential.

There is also a clear **connection to Rhode Island's statutory climate obligations**. Under the state's Act on Climate, we are required to achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Transportation remains one of the largest sources of emissions in the state. Maintaining and expanding public transit is one of the most immediate and proven methods to reduce emissions at scale. **Every rider shifted from a private vehicle to a bus contributes directly to those targets.**

This appropriation is therefore not only about maintaining current service levels. It is about preserving and strengthening a piece of infrastructure that **supports economic mobility**,

protects vulnerable populations **from rising costs**, and directly **advances the state's climate commitments**.

For these reasons, I strongly urge support for this resolution.

Thank you for your consideration.