

Dear Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Lounay Oliver-Camacho. I am a sophomore at Mount Pleasant High School, and a youth advocate at Young Voices. I am here today to talk about my experience with RIPTA, and to ask for your support in funding it by passing bills H8317, H8178, and H8145.

I remember riding RIPTA as early as eight years old. I grew up learning the routes to get groceries, to go to the doctor, and to go to church. When I turned 13, I started taking the bus by myself to go to school, and before I realized it, I was riding the bus six times a day for my daily schedule. For the past two years, I've been in a situation where I am constantly moving. There has not always been someone to drive me places, or who I could call for help immediately. Because of this, I relied on myself more than anyone. That meant using the only means of transportation a 14 year old like me could use, the bus.

At first, I had to spend \$2 on every single ride, but now that I'm finally in High School I was able to get a bus pass. This helped me so much. Instead of having to spend \$12 a day just to get to school, Young Voices, and home, I got to use that money to buy food. The bus also gave me access to other programs, which helped me get mental health support, and even food assistance. So many people rely on these services, just like me.

Without the bus, today I would have had to walk five hours to get to school, an extra hour to get to Young Voices and 6 more hours to get home tonight.

We need to fund RIPTA now, because without the bus, my peers and I would not be able to go to school. We would miss out on job opportunities, afterschool programs, and even having fun with friends. Although I can't speak for the thousands of people that rely on RIPTA, I want you all to know that I need RIPTA, for my education, for my growth, and for my future. Please pass bills H8317, H8178, and H8145.

Thank you all for your time today.