

Dear Chair Abney and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Cedric Ye, and I am a high school student from Providence. I am writing in support of Rep. Stewart's H8145, which would reallocate the rideshare sales tax to RIPTA's RIdе Anywhere program.

I am not a paratransit user myself, but I have experienced the opportunities that access to public transit provides. I do not have a driver's license and access my school and nearly all of my extracurriculars, employment, and social opportunities with RIPTA. Through access to civic engagement and volunteering opportunities I otherwise would have never had, public transit has likely enabled many of my college acceptances and ultimate educational outcomes. For individuals with physical disabilities, access to public transit is even more important. Many individuals with disabilities live outside the traditional paratransit service area and reported being housebound for years or even decades before RIdе Anywhere's creation. With the reductions or eliminations of fixed route service around the state, the traditional paratransit area has shrunk even further, making the continued sustainability of RIdе Anywhere even more important.

While I appreciate the General Assembly's requirement to maintain this lifeline service in last year's budget, that mandate was left unfunded, and paratransit riders are paying the price. Many paratransit riders have reported overcapacity and denied trips, reflecting how RIPTA is now literally too small for both its fixed route and paratransit riders. Most concerning, according to a memo from CEO Durand, "With the Rhode Island General Assembly's requirement that RIPTA expand the RIdе paratransit program statewide, beyond ADA service area requirements, it is important to manage capacity and strengthen controls around program participation to protect the system's intended users." Without additional funding for RIdе anywhere, I'm extremely concerned that RIPTA will strengthen restrictions to cut out many of the system's "intended users", depriving Rhode Islanders of a critical lifeline service.

RIPTA is not "rightsized", it is wrongsized from last year's service cuts and is too small to support its existing fixed route and paratransit demand. **I urge you to please support H8145, a simple but critical step in ensuring that every Rhode Islander, no matter their home address or ability, can access the educational, career, and quality of life opportunities that make Rhode Island so special and competitive.**

Thank you so much for your consideration,  
Cedric Ye

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