



April 14, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of H-8317 and H-8178 — Restoring and Strengthening RIPTA

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

On behalf of SEIU 1199NE, representing approximately 7,500 healthcare, home care, and child care workers across Rhode Island, I write in support of H-8317 and H-8178.

Our members work every day with Rhode Islanders who depend on consistent access to healthcare and basic services. When RIPTA service is reduced, our members see the consequences immediately. Patients miss appointments. People delay or skip care. Individuals struggle to get prescriptions, groceries, or other essentials. These disruptions affect people's health, stability, and ability to live independently.

Many of the people our members serve rely on public transportation as their primary way to get around. When service becomes less frequent or less reliable, it creates gaps in care and support. Missed appointments lead to worsening health conditions. Delays in accessing services turn manageable situations into emergencies. These are the same populations—low-income workers, seniors, and people with disabilities—who are most dependent on transit and most affected when it fails.

These challenges also affect the systems our members work in. Healthcare and care settings depend on people being able to show up consistently—whether that's a patient, a client, or a worker in the broader workforce. When transportation becomes unreliable, it leads to missed visits, delays in care, and additional strain on already stretched systems.

Reliable public transportation also plays a broader role in the state's quality of life. It allows people to stay connected to their communities, maintain independence, and access the services they need. When that access breaks down, people become more isolated, less stable, and more likely to experience worsening health and economic hardship.

There are also clear economic consequences. A reliable transit system allows more people to get to work consistently and helps employers maintain a stable workforce. It expands access to jobs and supports local businesses. When service is cut, it limits those opportunities and makes it harder for working-class Rhode Islanders to stay employed and financially stable.

H-8317 would take an important step by restoring \$5 million in funding to reverse the 2025 service cuts. For the people our members serve, that means restoring access to care, services, and daily life.

H-8178 addresses the longer-term issue by increasing RIPTA's share of the Highway Maintenance Fund from 10% to 20%. Rhode Island has historically underinvested in public transit compared to highways, even though transit remains essential for thousands of residents.

This change is especially important as RIPTA's primary funding source—the gas tax—continues to decline with the transition to electric vehicles. At the same time, RIPTA has been found to operate efficiently and in line with peer agencies. The issue is not efficiency—it is whether the system has the resources to meet the needs of the people who rely on it.

For our members, this comes down to whether the people they care for can consistently access healthcare, work, and basic necessities, and whether the systems they work in can function the way they are supposed to.

We urge the Committee to support H-8317 and H-8178.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Moore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alex Moore
Political Director
SEIU 1199NE
amoore@seiu1199ne.org
678-910-3378