

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** Jeanelle Wheeler <jeanellewheeler@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 14, 2026 11:52 AM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** SUPPORT (H8317) - \$5 million Budget Allocation for RIPTA

**Categories:** Red category

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Dear Chair Abney and Committee members,

My name is Jeanelle Wheeler. I live in Providence, and I am writing in support of Bill H8317, Representative Alzate's \$5M allocation to reverse RIPTA's service cuts.

I rely on RIPTA every single day to get to live my life. The service cuts has impacted my ability to reliably get around, go to work, and see my friends and family. Due to the cuts, I now have to walk nearly an extra mile to get my bus connections after work.

The cuts haven't just been devastating for me - they've been devastating for the tens of thousands of riders like me. A [report](#) released by the Save RIPTA coalition found that since the service cuts went into effect in September 2025:

- Ridership dropped 12.1% or about 125,000 trips by November
- Riders are burdened with less reliable and frequent service — restricting access to jobs, healthcare, education, and recreation.
- 30% of RIPTA riders are at risk of losing employment, 8% lost pay, and 3.6% lost their jobs directly
- RIPTA operators' working conditions have deteriorated
- RIPTA service has gotten 29% more expensive to operate per service hour

'Public Transit' is mentioned no less than 80 times in Rhode Island's own strategic plans for [economic development](#), [housing production](#), and [climate](#). However, the service cuts have left RIPTA too small and crippled to even meet the needs of its existing riders, let alone expand to strengthen our state's competitiveness and livability.

That's why I'm urging you to support H8317. Without reversing RIPTA's devastating service cuts, RIPTA cannot meet the needs of a growing population that requires affordable and sustainable transportation, and RIPTA cannot grow to meet our climate, social justice, and economic goals.

Sincerely,

Jeanelle Wheeler