



April 14, 2026

Honorable Representative Marvin Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for House Resolution 8317 – Making an Appropriation of \$5,000,000 to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI) I am writing in strong support of H-8317, which would appropriate \$5 million to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to reverse service cuts.

The Housing Network of Rhode Island is an alliance of organizations including housing developers, service providers, advocacy organizations, and more who share the vision that all Rhode Islanders live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes and thriving communities. Our network includes nonprofit developers who operate and maintain more than 7,500 long-term affordable homes in 27 communities across Rhode Island, as well as organizations serving the more than 2,500 Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness. We are a member of the Save RIPTA Coalition, as housing and transit are inextricably linked.

Just like safe, healthy, affordable homes, reliable, accessible, and affordable public transportation is critical infrastructure that supports economic mobility and strong communities. Our members develop and manage homes in nearly every corner of the state, including areas where residents rely on public transit to get to jobs, schools, healthcare, stores, and other daily activities. Many of these residents are older adults, people with disabilities, workers in low-wage occupations, and families with children—individuals who depend on consistent and affordable transit to maintain stability.

The recent service cuts have been devastating for tens of thousands of riders. A report from the Save RIPTA coalition found that since the cuts went into effect in September 2025, ridership dropped by 12.1%—approximately 125,000 trips by November. Riders are now facing less reliable and less frequent service, restricting access to jobs, healthcare, education, and daily needs. Alarming, 30% of riders are at risk of losing employment, 8% have already lost pay, and 3.6% have lost their jobs as a direct result. At the same time, RIPTA operators are experiencing worsening working conditions, and service has become 29% more expensive to operate per service hour.

Without reversing these cuts, the impact on housing stability will continue to grow. Households already burdened by high housing costs are forced to take on additional transportation expense, turning to rideshare services or increased car usage to fill gaps in service. For residents who cannot

drive, particularly older adults and people with disabilities, service reductions can lead to increased isolation and reduced access to essential services.

Public transit is not a peripheral issue—it is foundational to Rhode Island’s future. “Public transit” is referenced dozens of times across the state’s strategic plans for economic development, housing production, and climate action. Yet, these service cuts have left RIPTA too diminished to meet even current demand, let alone expand in ways that support a growing, competitive, and sustainable state.

Transit access is also central to modern housing development. Many funding programs and planning frameworks prioritize proximity to transit, including transit-oriented development initiatives and the State’s Housing 2030 Plan. Undermining RIPTA directly undermines these efforts and limits our ability to produce housing in locations that reduce costs, improve quality of life, and support environmental goals.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to support H-8317. Reversing these service cuts is essential to ensure that RIPTA can meet the needs of Rhode Islanders today and grow to meet our shared goals around housing stability, economic mobility, climate resilience, and equity.

We thank Chairwoman Alzate for her leadership in advancing this resolution and extend our gratitude to the Committee for their consideration of this important bill and leadership on these critical issues. Please feel free to reach me at kwest@housingnetworkri.org or (401) 721-5680 x 105 for any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie West".

Katie West, Director of Strategic Partnerships