



LOCAL DIVISION 618
AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION, AFL-CIO-CLC
HEADQUARTERS

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Dear Chair Abney and Committee members,

My name is **Walter Melillo President, Business Agent, ATU Local 618**, I live in **Cranston**, and I am writing in support of Bill H8317, Representative Alzate's \$5M allocation to reverse **RIPTA's** service cuts.

I represent approximately **700 employees** at the **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority**. These service reductions have significantly impacted the health and safety of our members, resulting in diminished recovery periods while on duty and negatively affecting both their mental and physical well-being. Riders are also experiencing decreased service quality and reduced frequency due to these cuts.

The service cuts have been devastating for 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,



Walter Melillo

President, Business Agent, ATU Local 618