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Please see below written testimony in support of proposed bill H7460-

To the Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee, My name is Heidi Andrews, and I am writing to express my support for H7460, which provides local education agencies with a mechanism to opt out of the statewide transportation system upon demonstrating a more cost-effective alternative.

As someone deeply engaged in the Foster–Glocester school community, I have spent considerable time examining structural inefficiencies that impact both taxpayers and the quality of services delivered to students. Transportation is one of the most significant and often overlooked cost drivers within our education system. The current statewide fee-for-service model, while well-intentioned, does not always reflect the realities or needs of smaller, regional, or rural districts like ours.

H7460 represents a practical and responsible step forward. It does not dismantle the statewide system; rather, it introduces flexibility and local control—two principles that are essential for effective governance. By allowing districts to opt out only when they can demonstrate a more cost-effective alternative, the bill ensures accountability while encouraging innovation.

From a local perspective, districts like Foster and Glocester face unique geographic and logistical challenges. Long transportation routes across town lines, low student density, and regional school structures often result in disproportionately high transportation costs. Under the current model, communities have limited ability to explore creative or more efficient solutions, even when those solutions could yield meaningful savings for taxpayers.

This bill creates an opportunity to:

- * Reduce unnecessary transportation costs by empowering districts to pursue tailored solutions
- * Improve service efficiency by aligning transportation planning with local needs
- * Encourage fiscal responsibility without compromising student access or safety
- * Promote innovation in how districts collaborate, contract, or design transportation systems

Importantly, H7460 maintains a safeguard by requiring a clear demonstration of cost-effectiveness before opting out. This ensures that any alternative model is not only different—but better.

In a time when communities are striving to strengthen schools while managing tight budgets, this type of flexibility is essential. Savings realized through more efficient transportation can be reinvested directly into classrooms, student supports, and educational opportunities.

I urge the Committee to support H7460 as a thoughtful, balanced approach to modernizing school transportation policy in Rhode Island. It respects both statewide coordination and local expertise—striking the right balance between consistency and adaptability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Andrews

Glocester, RI

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