

Angel's Testimony in Opposition to House Bills 7212 and 7213

January 28, 2026

To the Committee Chair and Members of House Judiciary Committee

My name is Angel Lopez, and I am a resident of Providence. I am writing to you today in opposition to House Bills 7212 and 7213. Both bills impact every public road within Rhode Island. Each public road is considered a Public Right-of-Way, meaning the maintenance and upkeep of each road is paid for by taxpayer dollars. Every elected official within Rhode Island is entrusted by their respective constituents to ensure that all public roads are maintained. The workforce depends on public roads to commute to their job to keep themselves and their families housed, fed, and clothed. Public roads are used to get students to school, whether in our own vehicles or by School Buses. Public roads are used to travel to main street for shopping and dining, and to enjoy the outdoor activities our state offers like festivals and beaches. In addition, public roads are the only way RIPTA navigates and are used by law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, and social workers to provide services across this state.

The proposed changes to existing RI General Laws will make negligence regarding the maintenance of public roads affordable for towns, cities, and RIDOT. The Cap of \$3,000 per incident will enable more negligence to occur and lead to an increase in vehicle insurance rates. These insurance rate hikes will not only impact privately owned vehicles, but they will also impact vehicles utilized by state and municipal departments and agencies.

If I look back at the last ten years, I have seen potholes grow into craters that can fit a child before they are patched up. Three of those roads are near RI Hospital, Olneyville Square, and the Hartford Avenue exit off Route 6 West. \$3,000 is just enough to cover repair costs for most vehicles that fall into a pothole but is not enough, when a severe pothole causes a collision with multiple vehicles. House Bill 7212 will also include bridges and barriers enabling even more neglect to the bridges and overpasses that currently require attention. Both bills will make RI more expensive for everyone.

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Committee Chair, I would like to bring RI General laws §39-32 enacted in 2017 to your attention. I have mentioned the law previously during past testimonies as a culprit of adverse impacts to public health and municipal budgets. RI Gen. Laws Title 39 chapter 32 has made it more difficult for municipal legislators to ensure roads are maintained. Streets in Providence have different owners and I am sure the same goes with most cities and towns within RI. I am not going to mention any names, but I would like to point out that I have never heard the name of any entity who has obtained ownership of the Public Rights-of-Way of telephone poles via the RI Small Cell Siting Act of 2017 mentioned as an owner of the a street.

House Committee on Judiciary, I urge you all to hold House Bills 7212 and 7213 until an investigation that looks into the adverse impacts to public health and municipal budgets caused by RI General Laws §39-32 is conducted.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

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