

Dear honorable members of the House Committee on Labor,

My name is Cedric Ye, and I am a high school student who lives in Providence. I would like to **urge you to support H5304**, Deputy Speaker Hull's act requiring any employer with more than 500 employees to offer RIPTA bus passes as a pre-tax benefit.

As a result of chronic underfunding combined with the loss of pandemic-era federal aid, RIPTA currently faces a \$32.6M budget gap, which threatens to devastate our already insufficient transit system when it has never been more important to expand it.

A well-funded public transit system is essential to Rhode Island's future. The Washington Bridge debacle illustrates the vulnerability of our transportation system where there are no viable alternatives to driving, creating a single point of failure. With the new federal administration's extreme hostility to electric vehicles, it is even more obvious that Rhode Island cannot meet its Act on Climate mandates -- 40% of which is transportation -- without reducing driving. And **Rhode Island cannot have a competitive economy without a well-funded transit system**; in fact, the CEO of Hasbro said in moving their headquarters out of Pawtucket they would be "prioritizing convenience to public transit" ([Providence Journal](#)).

As someone who takes RIPTA to school almost daily, I have seen the power of employer-subsidized transit passes: The majority of riders boarding in my neighborhood, Wayland, use Brown University's UPASS; these are people who may have alternatives but chose to use RIPTA because it was a more compelling option. UPASS provides RIPTA more than half a million dollars, fills up bus seats, and makes driving and parking vastly less challenging. There are so many opportunities to replicate this success statewide, like the Amazon Fulfillment Center covering \$90,000 in fares for employees.

Finally, this legislation would affect a *tiny* number of employers; only 1.1% of Rhode Island businesses employ more than 500 people ([Economic Progress Institute](#)). Furthermore, it only affects large businesses who are most able to offer transit benefits, and -- employing 48.8% of Rhode Island's workforce -- impose the largest burden on our transportation system, creating the greatest emissions, traffic, and road damage.

I therefore urge you to please support H5304, a small but crucial step in helping generate more revenue for RIPTA and create both funding and ridership to make service improvements possible. Rhode Island's economic and sustainability goals depend on a robust transit system, and every little bit counts to one of the most financially efficient transit agencies in the region.

Thank you so much for your consideration,
Cedric Ye