



Alimente

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TO: Senate Finance Committee

Chair DiPalma and Honorable Members of the Committee

SUBJECT: SUPPORT (S2825) - \$5 Million Budget Allocation for RIPTA

My name is Jason Kashdan. I'm a registered dietitian based in Providence and the founder of Alimente, an equity-focused nutrition and food policy strategy practice. I'm writing in strong support of S2825, Sen. McKenney's \$5 million allocation to reverse RIPTA's service cuts and begin restoring service to September 2025 levels.

I chose to move to Rhode Island after earning my Master's degree at Tufts University to complete my dietetic courses at URI. The commute was a breeze because I could rely on RIPTA to get between Providence and the Kingstown campus. I had the opportunity to read, chat with regulars I met on the route, and enjoy some downtime to help quiet the noise in my brain.

Today, my nutrition counseling approach is grounded in structural determinants of health, and public transportation is a crucial component. One concrete health benefit that RIPTA affords riders is the opportunity to pause from our hectic lives and ease symptoms of chronic stress. These days, I love taking the bus to get to my practice space in Providence. My nervous system is calmer, and I'm more relaxed and focused when I arrive.

Our community members who face the greatest barriers get hit first and hardest. Since the service cuts went into effect in September 2025, ridership dropped 12.1 percent, representing roughly 125,000 lost trips by November. Thirty percent of RIPTA riders are now at risk of losing employment, 8 percent have lost pay, and 3.6 percent have lost their jobs directly. In a compact state like Rhode Island, it should be easy to get where you need to go. Instead, we have normalized a vicious cycle of underfunding, service cuts, and preventable hardship.

I urge you to support S2825 to reverse RIPTA's service cuts and restore the system that helps people across our state reach jobs, groceries, schools, and healthcare.

Sincerely,

Jason Kashdan, MS, RD