

Dear Chair Burke and Committee members,

My name is Cedric Ye, and I am a high school student who lives in Providence. I am writing to **urge you to support S2323**, Sen. Bissalio's act requiring any employer with more than 500 employees to offer RIPTA bus passes as a pre-tax benefit.

Last year, legislative inaction forced RIPTA to make the largest service cuts in its 60 year history with cuts to 45 services. Even though ridership declined 12%, **RIPTA has been wrongsized and operates too few buses to support its current ridership**; according to a survey conducted by the Save RIPTA coalition, 70% of RIPTA drivers are leaving riders stranded at least once a day because buses are so overcrowded they are unable to accept new riders. Just \$5M in additional funding would reverse these devastating service cuts, and preliminary estimates suggest that passing a Commuter Transportation Benefits Act for large employers could fill 10-20% of this gap.

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 Rhode Island 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 S2323, 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 for one of the most financially efficient transit agencies in the region.

Thank you so much for your consideration,
Cedric Ye