



Public Testimony  
House Finance Committee  
Re: RIPTA Budget  
April 13, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty. We are here to oppose cuts to RIPTA's senior/disabled no-fare program and to ask that budget allocations are made which allow the program to be maintained.

Sister Joan Rokicki, RSM (Religious Sisters of Mercy), serves as an outreach worker at McAuley House in Providence. She is also a member of the steering committee for the RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty. Sister Joan Rokicki is here to testify before you, today, on this very important matter, one which affects many in her community quite directly. Please read and hear her testimony, on behalf of the RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty, attached in long-hand and typed below:

We have had many meetings, stating clearly and explicitly how 50 cents, \$1.00 or any increase in bus fare will cause great distress and pain to the most vulnerable, deprived and disabled citizens. More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of us use our cars to reach our destination. We have options on how we travel with very little concern whether 50 cents, a dollar, two dollars is needed. Unfortunately not all of society are so lucky. It is a crime of injustice and greed not to stand with those who are poor. We must stand and walk together on our journey.

We plead with you to look deep into your hearts and conscience before your creator, higher power, or whatever your belief – do the right thing – acting with justice, empathy, and compassion.

Please do not vote to increase the cost of bus transportation for our disabled sisters and brothers.

Poor senior citizens and people with disabilities rely on the senior/disabled fare program for basic transportation needs such as buying groceries, accessing community centers, visiting family or friends, getting to shelters, participating in recovery meetings, and attending religious services if one so chooses. While we recognize RIPTA's financial challenges, cutting the senior/disabled fare pass is not the right way to solve the problem. We believe that an allocation of \$1.5 million from the General Assembly, to RIPTA, with more support to be provided from EOHHS, if needed, provides a viable path forward for maintaining the no-fare bus pass. We urge you to make appropriations such that we can protect this vital service. Thank you for your time and for your public service.