



Public Testimony
Senate Finance Committee
Re: RIPTA Budget
May 12, 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 oppose cuts to RIPTA's senior/disabled no-fare program.

Many people with disabilities and senior citizens living in poverty rely on the senior/disabled fare program for basic transportation needs. The senior/disabled no-fare pass allows access to transportation for the essentials of daily life, such as buying groceries, accessing community centers, visiting family or friends, getting to overnight shelters, participating in recovery meetings, and attending religious services if they so choose. Many of these Rhode Islanders have very low-incomes or no incomes at all. The elimination of this program creates a substantive barrier to transportation for many of those in our state who are already most impoverished and at high risk for social isolation.

We are asking the General Assembly to make budget allocations which allow the senior/disabled no-fare program to continue to serve Rhode Islanders in need.

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- to \$2-million 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.