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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- ANNUAL FUNDING FOR RHODE
ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Sanchez, Stewart, J. Lombardi, Nardone, Tanzi,
Solomon, Cruz, Casimiro, Giraldo, and Potter

Date Introduced: February 15, 2024

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 39 of the General Laws entitled "PUBLIC UTILITIES AND
2 CARRIERS" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 18.2

4 ANNUAL FUNDING FOR RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY ACT

5 **39-18.2-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Annual Funding for Rhode Island
7 Public Transit Authority Act".

8 **39-18.2-2. Definitions.**

9 As used in this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings, unless the
10 context clearly indicates otherwise:

11 (1) "Collaboration." The state shall collaborate with relevant federal agencies to secure the
12 interest-free loan and ensure the efficient allocation of federal funds for repayment.

13 (2) "Compensation." Compensation, in this context, refers to the payment or remuneration
14 provided to Rhode Island public transit authority ("RIPTA") drivers and staff for their services.

15 (3) "Costs associated." Refers to the financial expenditures linked to providing free public
16 transportation. These costs are intended to be covered through the annual funding mechanism
17 outlined in this chapter.

18 (4) "Detailed account." The Rhode Island public transit authority is required to provide a

1 detailed account that includes information on debts, repayments, and installments related to the
2 interest-free loan. This serves to transparently outline the utilization of the loan funds and the
3 repayment process.

4 (5) "Federal funds." Federal funds refer to financial resources provided by the United States
5 government, typically allocated for specific purposes. In this case, the state is obtaining an interest-
6 free loan to advance federal funds allocated to transportation and ultimate change.

7 (6) "Fiscal year." A fiscal year is a twelve (12) month accounting period used for financial
8 reporting and budgeting purposes. In this context, it signifies the annual period during which
9 financial transactions and budgetary considerations take place.

10 (7) "Free public transportation service." This provision mandates that public transportation
11 service provided by the Rhode Island public transit authority be offered free of charge throughout
12 the state. The objective is to reduce costs for patrons, encourage increased usage of public
13 transportation, and contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing emissions.

14 (8) "Implementation measures." The Rhode Island public transit authority is tasked with
15 taking necessary measures to implement the provisions of this chapter, ensuring the effective
16 execution of the outlined requirements.

17 (9) "Interest-free loan." An interest-free loan is a financial arrangement where the borrower
18 is not required to pay any interest on the borrowed amount. In this chapter, the state is mandated to
19 secure such a loan at the commencement of each fiscal year.

20 (10) "Loan amount." The loan amount is the sum of money borrowed by the state,
21 determined based on the financial needs of the Rhode Island public transit authority for the previous
22 fiscal year.

23 (11) "Outstanding debts." Outstanding debts denote any unpaid financial obligations
24 carried over from the previous fiscal year, which the interest-free loan aims to cover.

25 (12) "Repayment." Repayment involves returning the borrowed funds, and in this case,
26 the interest-free loan obtained is to be repaid using federal funds allocated to transportation and
27 climate change.

28 (13) "Transportation and climate change." This term signifies a specific category of federal
29 funds, presumably earmarked for initiatives related to transportation infrastructure and climate
30 change mitigation efforts.

31 **39-18.2-3. Annual funding for RIPTA.**

32 (a) At the beginning of each fiscal year, the state shall secure an interest-free loan to
33 advance federal funds allocated to transportation and climate change.

34 (b) The purpose of this loan shall be to ensure the compensation of Rhode Island public

1 [transit authority drivers and staff and to cover any outstanding debts from the previous year.](#)

2 [\(c\) The loan amount shall be determined based on the financial needs of the Rhode Island](#)
3 [public transit authority for the previous fiscal year.](#)

4 **39-18.2-4. Repayment.**

5 [\(a\) The interest-free loan obtained pursuant to this chapter shall be repaid using federal](#)
6 [funds allocated to transportation and climate change.](#)

7 [\(b\) The Rhode Island public transit authority shall provide a detailed account of debts,](#)
8 [repayments, and installments upon each loan detailing the utilization of the loan funds and the](#)
9 [repayment process to the relevant state authorities.](#)

10 **39-18.2-5. Free public transportation service.**

11 [\(a\) In order to reduce costs for patrons and minimize emissions, the Rhode Island public](#)
12 [transit authority service shall be provided free of charge throughout the state to encourage increased](#)
13 [usage of public transportation and contribute to environmental sustainability.](#)

14 [\(b\) The costs associated with providing free public transportation shall be covered through](#)
15 [the annual funding mechanism outlined in this chapter.](#)

16 **39-18.2-6. Implementation.**

17 [\(a\) The Rhode Island public transit authority shall take necessary measures to implement](#)
18 [the provisions of this chapter.](#)

19 [\(b\) The state shall collaborate with relevant federal agencies to secure the interest-free loan](#)
20 [and ensure the efficient allocation of federal funds for repayment.](#)

21 SECTION 2. Section 31-10.3-15 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-10.3 entitled "Rhode
22 Island Uniform Commercial Driver's License Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

23 **31-10.3-15. Persons not eligible for licensing.**

24 (a) The department shall not issue any license pursuant to this chapter:

25 (1) To any person, as a commercial driver, who is under the age of twenty-one (21) years;
26 except for intrastate operations, the applicant must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. This
27 exception shall not apply to school bus drivers and drivers of placarded vehicles.

28 (2) To any person whose license or privilege has been suspended, canceled, revoked or
29 otherwise withdrawn during suspension, cancellation, revocation, or withdrawal and not until the
30 person has complied with all requirements for reinstatement.

31 (3) To any person who is a habitual drunkard, or is addicted to controlled substances.

32 (4) To any person who is required by this chapter to take an examination, unless the person
33 shall have successfully passed the examination.

34 (5) To any person when the administrator has good cause based on clear and convincing

1 evidence to believe that the person does not meet a standard of physical or mental fitness for motor
2 vehicle licensure established pursuant to § 31-10-44(b), and that the person's physical or mental
3 condition prevents him or her from being able to operate a motor vehicle with safety upon the
4 highways. However, an insulin dependent person shall not automatically be denied a license. Each
5 case shall be decided individually; certification by a physician that the person is being regularly
6 monitored, that the person's condition is stable and under control, and that the person is otherwise
7 medically qualified to safely operate a motor vehicle shall be conclusive and a license strictly
8 limited to intrastate use shall be issued. The license must clearly state on its face that the license is
9 restricted to intrastate use only; provided, however, nothing contained in this section shall prohibit
10 the issuance of an interstate license as long as all federal regulations are met.

11 (6) To any person who is required under the laws of this state to file or deposit proof of
12 financial responsibility and who has not deposited that proof.

13 (7) To any person when, after a hearing, the administrator has good cause to conclude that
14 the operation of a motor vehicle on the highways by the person is likely to pose an imminent safety
15 risk to the general public by reason of the person's past conduct in motor vehicle operation during
16 the preceding two (2) year period. The hearing shall focus exclusively upon whether a declination
17 to issue a license is necessary in order to protect public safety, relying upon findings of the
18 circumstances under which each past motor vehicle offense was committed, the likelihood of
19 recurrence, and the deterrent effect that might reasonably be expected from the declination.
20 Provided, a person shall not be required to have been a licensed driver for a minimum of two (2)
21 years at the time of submitting an application for a commercial driver's license pursuant to this
22 chapter.

23 (b) The department shall notify in writing any person whose application for a license has
24 been denied pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The notice shall contain the factual and legal
25 basis for the denial, the procedure for requesting a hearing, and the rights afforded the individual
26 pursuant to § 31-11-7(d) — (f). When physical or mental fitness is the basis for the denial, the
27 notice shall refer to the specific functional standard promulgated pursuant to § 31-10-44(b), which
28 was relied upon by the department. Upon his or her request the department shall afford the license
29 applicant an opportunity for a hearing as early as practical and no later than twenty (20) days after
30 receipt of the request.

31 (c) The hearing procedures afforded the applicant shall conform to the provisions of § 31-
32 11-7(d) — (f).

1 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2025.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- ANNUAL FUNDING FOR RHODE
ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY ACT

1 This act would provide a mechanism for funding the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
2 through the use of an annual interest-free loan to advance federal funds allocated to transportation
3 and climate change. This act would also remove a regulatory requirement that an applicant for a
4 commercial driver's license be a licensed driver for a minimum of two (2) years at the time of
5 submitting the application.

6 This act would take effect on January 1, 2025.

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