

Believe in Rhode Island

Childcare & Transportation for Working Families

Four years ago, I walked into a room of about 75 carpenters. I thought I knew what that conversation was going to be about: Wages. Job sites. Materials costs.

Then the first man stood up and he started talking about childcare. He talked about what it was costing his family and what that cost was doing to them. I looked around that room and I watched all the other carpenters nod, like he was saying out loud what they all had experienced for years. That moment has never left me. Because that man wasn't asking for anything special. He was asking for a Rhode Island that works for people like him, and we have not given it to him.

The cost of infant care in this state is now higher than both in-state college tuition and the average monthly rent. Despite this high cost, childcare workers themselves are most often paid a wage that makes it difficult for them to make ends meet. There is not a single community in this state where someone earning \$100,000 a year can afford to buy a home. And just last year, our public transit was on life support before a last-minute budget patch.

We need to attract and grow more good-paying jobs in Rhode Island. But with the high cost of childcare, transportation, and housing, even good-paying jobs aren't enough to make life affordable for Rhode Islanders. I'm excited to announce my plans for investing in the services that jobs depend on, so Rhode Islanders can afford to go to work in the good-paying jobs that we're creating in the Ocean State.

Rhode Islanders love this state, but too many feel it's no longer working for them. No one should have to leave a place they love because they cannot afford to stay. When I'm governor, they won't have to.

—*Helena*

Removing Barriers to Work

You cannot have a jobs plan that ignores where people can afford to live, how they can get to work, and whether they have affordable childcare to rely on. From 2020 to 2025, Rhode Island ranked dead last nationally in percentage of housing units added, and added fewer than 1,500 housing units statewide last year, despite estimates that we need 24,000 additional units to close the housing supply gap.¹ At the same time, infant care in Rhode Island costs \$18,486 a year²—or nearly 50% of a single parent's median income.³ And to make matters worse, Gov. McKee's cuts to RIPTA nearly eliminated routes and fired drivers last year before a last-minute budget patch. These are not social services problems. They are failures of our economic infrastructure, and if we want to grow jobs in this state, we need to address them head-on.

ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE AND PRE-K

Create an Employer-Matched Childcare Fund

The cost of childcare in Rhode Island has become completely unsustainable—the average cost of infant care in the state is higher not only than in-state tuition for a four-year public college, it is also higher than the average rent in the state.⁴ And though the cost of childcare is out of control, childcare workers themselves are most often paid a wage that makes it difficult for them to make ends meet. While the state has expanded the number of seats available for Head Start and RI Pre-K, we remain far short of our goal of actually providing universal pre-Kindergarten access, with less than a third of low-income children enrolled in these programs.⁵

I will propose a Rhode Island employer-matched childcare fund, starting with a \$20 million pilot, designed to reduce the cost of care for working parents, while sharing responsibility between employers and the state. While affordable and accessible childcare is an obvious boon to working parents in Rhode Island, it is a boon to businesses, too, as employers who invest in their workers' childcare are better able to retain those workers, grow their businesses, and support Rhode Island's economy.

Expand Childcare Assistance and Pre-K

As governor, I will expand state tax credits for childcare assistance until we can get stronger federal support, and I will ensure that every Rhode Island family has access to pre-Kindergarten education by the end of my second term. While the state has made real progress in increasing access to more and more Rhode Island families, those who are still today unable to afford pre-K or get a spot in a pre-K program cannot sit around and wait for federal funding to be provided.

¹National, State, and County Housing Unit Totals: 2020-2025, U.S. Census Bureau (2026)

²First Five Years Fund (2025)

³ChildCare Aware: 2024 Price of Care: Child Care Affordability Analysis

⁴"Child care costs in the United States." Economic Policy Institute

⁵"2025 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook." Rhode Island Kids Count, 2025



AN ALL-OF-THE-ABOVE STRATEGY FOR MORE HOUSING

Increase Housing Supply and Improve Affordability

My Rhode Home Program is a comprehensive proposal to tackle our state's housing crisis head-on, with a plan to create a billion-dollar revolving loan fund—paid for by a marginal tax increase on Rhode Islanders making over a million dollars—to spur the construction of 20,000 new homes and apartments statewide. With more than half of Rhode Islanders citing housing costs as the most important issue facing the state—and more than 90% calling it a serious problem—we simply cannot create the jobs this state needs to help grow new and established businesses without addressing the problem.

RIPTA ROUTES THAT CONNECT WORKERS TO JOBS

Invest in Job-Access Transit Routes

RIPTA's own Transit Forward RI study identified an annual funding gap of approximately \$84 million to deliver the service network Rhode Island needs.⁶ I will propose a \$15 million first-year appropriation for job-access routes connecting workers to Quonset, ProvPort, hospital campuses, and the warehouse corridor. When a transit district in the St. Louis metro added targeted runs to an industrial park, ridership on that corridor jumped 81 percent. The principle is simple: run the buses where the jobs are. This will include expanded transportation routes and access to jobs in the ocean economy, allowing workers throughout Rhode Island to benefit from state investments in a growing industry that depends on skilled workers to fill good-paying jobs. Affordable housing near job centers also shortens commutes and reduces transit dependency—another reason the 20,000-unit housing commitment is not just important for providing people an affordable place to live; it's also important economic policy that allows Rhode Island workers and companies to thrive.

⁶RIPTA: Transit Forward Funding Options Study (2021)

