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(Original Signature of Member)

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. PRESSLEY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to carry out a grant program to support efforts to provide fare-free transit service, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Freedom to Move Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

6 The purposes of this Act are—

1 (1) to invest in State, county, and local municipi-
2 palities efforts to provide fare-free public transpor-
3 tation; and

4 (2) to support State, county, and local municipi-
5 palities in improving and expanding access to safe,
6 accessible, and reliable mass transit systems in order
7 to improve the livability of communities.

8 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

9 Congress finds the following:

10 (1) Increasing access to safe, reliable, and af-
11 fordable public transit systems, including buses,
12 light rail, and subways can help increase community
13 livability and mobility to critical services such as
14 education, jobs, and healthcare.

15 (2) The cost of transit fares can act as a chal-
16 lenging economic barrier for low-income individuals
17 and families who are most likely to rely on public
18 transportation to access critical services and must
19 spend larger parts of their household budget on
20 transportation services. Removing economic barriers
21 to safe, reliable, and affordable public transit, can
22 help to increase social and economic mobility by in-
23 creasing access to education, training, and employ-
24 ment.

1 (3) Individuals with disabilities are twice as
2 likely as those without disabilities to have inadequate
3 access to safe, affordable, and reliable transpor-
4 tation. Reports have found that of the nearly 2 mil-
5 lion people with disabilities who are unable to leave
6 their homes, nearly 30 percent is due to lack of ade-
7 quate transportation.

8 (4) As the senior population continues to grow,
9 an increasing number of elderly adults depend on
10 public transit to access medical care and other vital
11 services. Additionally, the percentage of 13 to 34
12 year-olds without a driver's license continues to
13 grow. Taken together, these trends show the unprec-
14 edented urgency of investing in and improving our
15 public transit systems.

16 (5) According to the Department of Transpor-
17 tation, transportation accounts for 29 percent of
18 greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Pub-
19 lic transportation, however, produces significantly
20 lower greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile
21 than by private vehicles. Increasing public transit
22 ridership and moving more people to and from crit-
23 ical services with fewer vehicles on the road can re-
24 duce greenhouse gas emissions.

1 (6) Eliminating transit fares and significantly
2 reducing economic barriers to public transit will help
3 to reduce the need for fare evasion policies that dis-
4 proportionately criminalize low-income individuals
5 and people of color.

6 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO SUPPORT FARE-FREE TRANSIT.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 360 days after the
8 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall award
9 grants (which shall be known as “Freedom to Move
10 Grants”) to eligible entities, on a competitive basis, to
11 cover the lost fare revenue for fare-free public transpor-
12 tation and improve public transportation.

13 (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
14 under this section, an eligible entity shall submit to the
15 Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
16 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
17 quire, including, at a minimum, the following:

18 (1) A description of how the eligible entity
19 plans to implement fare free transit access.

20 (2) A description of how the entity will work to
21 expand and improve bus service, which may in-
22 clude—

23 (A) a bus network redesign;

1 (B) how such redesign will prioritize con-
2 sistent and reliable service for low-income and
3 historically underserved communities;

4 (C) how such redesign will prioritize
5 connectivity to critical services and improve
6 community livability; and

7 (D) how the eligible entity will meaning-
8 fully consult with community, community lead-
9 ers, local stakeholders and advocates, including
10 transit advocates and disability advocates, local
11 education agencies and institutions of higher
12 education, community developers, labor unions,
13 public housing agencies and workforce develop-
14 ment boards, while facilitating such redesign.

15 (3) A description of how the eligible entity will
16 meaningfully partner and collaborate with commu-
17 nity, community leaders, local stakeholders and ad-
18 vocates, including transit advocates and disability
19 advocates, local education agencies and institutions
20 of higher education, community developers, labor
21 unions, public housing agencies and workforce devel-
22 opment boards to support outreach efforts to in-
23 crease awareness of fare-free bus and transit pro-
24 grams.

1 (4) A description of the eligible entity's equity
2 evaluation examining any transit and mobility gaps
3 within the current transit system and how the eligi-
4 ble entity plans to significantly improve these gaps,
5 including—

6 (A) the average commute times for driver
7 commuters and non-driver commuters;

8 (B) public transit ridership rates
9 disaggregated by mode of transportation and
10 demographic group (youth (including youth in-
11 volved in the foster care system), seniors, indi-
12 viduals with disabilities, and low-income status);
13 and

14 (C) average length of bus routes and aver-
15 age delay times.

16 (5) A description of the eligible entity's current
17 fare evasion enforcement policies, including—

18 (A) the cost of the fine and whether the in-
19 fraction is considered a civil offense or a crimi-
20 nal offense punishable by imprisonment;

21 (B) the number of individuals charged with
22 violating a fare evasion policy, disaggregated by
23 age, race, gender, and disability status; and

1 (C) how the eligible entity plans to elimi-
2 nate fare evasion policies and end the criminal-
3 ization of individuals evading fares.

4 (6) An estimate of additional costs as a result
5 of increased ridership, including—

6 (A) fuel;

7 (B) personnel;

8 (C) maintenance; and

9 (D) other operational costs.

10 (7) Information and statistics on assaults on
11 transit employees and a description of trainings and
12 policies to protect employees, which may include de-
13 escalation training.

14 (c) DURATION.—Grants awarded under this section
15 shall be for a 5 year period.

16 (d) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In car-
17 rying out the program under this section, the Secretary
18 shall award grants to eligible entities located in both rural
19 and urbanized areas.

20 (e) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
21 a grant under this section shall use such grant to sup-
22 port—

23 (1) implementing a fare-free transit program;
24 and

1 (2) efforts to improve public transportation,
2 particularly in underserved communities, including
3 costs associated with efforts to provide more safe,
4 frequent, and reliable bus service, including—

5 (A) bus stop safety and accessibility im-
6 provements;

7 (B) pedestrian and bike shelters;

8 (C) signage;

9 (D) painted bus lanes;

10 (E) signal priority systems;

11 (F) street redesign;

12 (G) operational costs to meet demands of
13 increased ridership, including hiring and train-
14 ing of personnel; and

15 (H) conducting a bus network redesign.

16 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this section, the
18 term “eligible entity” means—

19 (A) a State, county, local municipality;

20 (B) a transit agency;

21 (C) a private nonprofit organization en-
22 gaged in public transportation in rural areas; or

23 (D) a partnership between entities de-
24 scribed in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

1 (2) UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.—The term
2 “underserved community” means—

3 (A) a community not served by existing
4 bus routes or infrequent service; and

5 (B) a community located in an area within
6 a census tract that is identified as—

7 (i) a low-income community; and

8 (ii) a community of color.

9 (3) LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS.—The term
10 “low-income individuals” means an individual whose
11 family income is at or below 150 percent of the pov-
12 erty line (as that term is defined in section 673(2)
13 of the Community Service Block Grant Act (42
14 U.S.C. 9902(2)), including any revision required by
15 that section) for a family of the size involved.

16 (4) FOSTER CARE YOUTH.—The term “foster
17 care youth”—

18 (A) means children and youth whose care
19 and placement are the responsibility of the
20 State or Tribal agency that administers a State
21 or Tribal plan under part B or E of title IV of
22 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.
23 and 670 et seq.), without regard to whether fos-
24 ter care maintenance payments are made under

1 section 472 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 672) on be-
2 half of such children and youth; and

3 (B) includes individuals who were age 13
4 or older when their care and placement were
5 the responsibility of a State or Tribal agency
6 that administered a State or Tribal plan under
7 part B or E of title IV of the Social Security
8 Act (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq. and 670 et seq.)
9 and who are no longer under the care and re-
10 sponsibility of such a State or Tribal agency,
11 without regard to any such individual's subse-
12 quent adoption, guardianship arrangement, or
13 other form of permanency outcome.

14 (5) PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.—The term
15 “public transportation”—

16 (A) means regular, continuing shared-ride
17 surface transportation services that are open to
18 the general public or open to a segment of the
19 general public defined by age, disability, or low
20 income; and

21 (B) does not include—

22 (i) intercity passenger rail transpor-
23 tation provided by the entity described in
24 chapter 243 of title 49, United States
25 Code, (or a successor to such entity);

- 1 (ii) intercity bus service;
- 2 (iii) charter bus service;
- 3 (iv) school bus service;
- 4 (v) sightseeing service;
- 5 (vi) courtesy shuttle service for pa-
- 6 trons of one or more specific establish-
- 7 ments; or
- 8 (vii) intra-terminal or intra-facility
- 9 shuttle services.

10 (g) REPORT.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after
12 the date on which funds are made available to carry
13 out this section, the Secretary shall collect data from
14 eligible entities receiving a grant under this section
15 on the progress of meeting the targets described in
16 the application of such entity.

17 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The report required
18 under paragraph (1) shall—

19 (A) collect data on demographics of com-
20 munities served under this Act, disaggregated
21 and cross-tabulated by—

- 22 (i) race
- 23 (ii) ethnicity;
- 24 (iii) sex; and
- 25 (iv) household median income; and

1 (B) progress towards significantly closing
2 transit equity gaps as described in subsection
3 (b)(4).

4 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
5 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
6 \$5,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through
7 2025.