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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## FAMILY SERVICE OF RHODE ISLAND, PAWTUCKET SCHOOLS LAUNCH CITY'S FIRST WALKING SCHOOL BUS

PROVIDENCE, RI, 2BApril 26, 2018– Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI) and the Pawtucket School Department have launched Pawtucket's first "Walking School Bus."

The Walking School Bus involves adults walking elementary school students to class by following a route, like a bus does, and walking together in groups. The Walking School Bus promotes school attendance, daily exercise, and positive relationships between the young students and the adult route leaders. In 2015, Pawtucket residents identified the Walking School Bus as a community priority in the Pawtucket and Central Falls Health Equity Zone Action Plan.

"I want to thank the Superintendent, our teachers and staff for thinking outside of the box to ensure that our students are safely walking to school, on time for learning, and staying healthy by exercising," said Pawtucket Mayor Donald R. Grebien at a press conference at the Agnes E. Little Elementary School, which is the first school in the city to be served by the Walking School Bus. He added, "I also want to thank our community partners for supporting this effort."

Family Service of Rhode Island pioneered the Walking School bus over the past six years in Providence and Central Falls.

"Family Service of Rhode Island has been serving Pawtucket families for decades, quietly and confidentially helping families in crisis," said Family Service of Rhode Island CEO Margaret Holland McDuff. "Thanks to a shared vision with the Mayor, Superintendent DiCenso, Principal Michael Gilmore and others, Family Service of Rhode Island will now help the young students of Pawtucket stay safe; arrive at school on time, ready to learn, ready to achieve; and have fun and get exercise!"

The school has launched two Walking School Bus routes serving a total of 16 students. The adults staffing the routes are several of the school's teachers: Diane Ferreira, Donna Langille, Janet Rabbit, Karen Mercer and Stephanie Baxter.

"This is an exciting new venture for Pawtucket to improve the health and wellness of the children and families we serve," said Pawtucket School Superintendent Patti DiCenso. "Some of our students are chronically absent because there's no one in their family who can walk them to school on a given day due to illness or job conflicts. The Walking School Bus will ensure these children are at their desk on time and ready to learn."

Emily Mallozzi, Pawtucket Community School Resource Coordinator, said "The Walking School Bus is a support to families who may need a little help getting their child off to school in the morning. We come right by their home to meet students, so parents know their child is safe, getting to school on time and will even get breakfast once we reach school. Mornings aren't easy, especially for those with young children, and this is just one thing our school can do to help ensure our students are arriving to school, ready to learn, every day."

In addition to the strong school and district support, the program is a community effort, through partnerships with the American Federation of Teachers, Pawtucket Teachers Alliance, LISC Rhode Island, Citizens Bank Growing Communities, PCF Development, and the Pawtucket and Central Falls Health Equity Zone supported by the Rhode Island Department of Health. The Walking School Bus is part of the Pawtucket Community Schools Initiative that has started at Agnes E. Little Elementary and the city hopes will expand in the near future.

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**About Family Service of Rhode Island:** FSRI is a comprehensive non-profit social service agency and essential part of the Rhode Island community. FSRI provides support to children and families-from birth to adulthood-through services focused on three general areas--physical and mental health, education, and overall well-being. Every program or service FSRI offers is geared towards promoting healthy families and strong communities.

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