



**Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan**  
58<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District

**House Bill 107 – Sponsor Testimony**  
**House Transportation and Public Safety Committee**  
**Wednesday, March 29, 2017**

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, and fellow members of the Transportation and Public Safety committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today for House Bill 107, which will require freight trains to consist of at least two crew members. I would like to thank my joint sponsor and Ranking Member Michael Sheehy for providing sponsor testimony to this necessary legislation.

The purpose of this legislation is simple; to increase the safety of freight trains in our state. This includes the safety for railroad workers, railroad companies, and the surrounding communities that these trains travel through. Today's freight trains carry extremely dangerous materials, including Bakken crude oil, ethanol, ammonia, liquefied petroleum gas and acids, which may pose significant health and safety risks to communities and our environment in the case of an accident. With thousands of miles of railroad track that crisscrosses the state through wilderness and urban areas, the potential for derailment or other accidents containing these materials is an ever-present danger. Two crew members are vital to ensuring that these trains are operated safely and our communities are secure.

In 2015, at least 14 other states – including Washington, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wyoming, Iowa, Utah and North Dakota - introduced minimum crew-size legislation. This includes Ranking Member Sheehy and I providing sponsor testimony in the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly. Engineer fatigue is a serious concern that could, in part, be alleviated with another crew member present. According to the National Transportation Safety Board, Engineer fatigue was the cause of at least eight major train accidents investigated between 2000 and 2014. In 2015, an American Airlines pilot had a heart attack and died while they were at the controls of the commercial aircraft. It was the co-pilot that was able to safely land the plane. Now, imagine the results if a similar incident occurred with a freight train. Without a required 2<sup>nd</sup> member, the results could be catastrophic.

Ohio SMART (Sheet Metal, Air, Rail Transportation Union) Transportation Division officials and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen also support the legislation.



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"While the advancement of technology has made the workplace safer, a machine cannot replace the trained eyes and ears of experienced professionals inside the cab of the locomotive," said BLET National President Dennis Pierce in a 2015 press release after California passed their two-person crew legislation. "Technology can only go so far. In the event of an emergency situation, a lone crew member cannot properly assess the situation, secure the train and notify all necessary emergency responders in a timely manner."

As the wife of a Locomotive Engineer, for 30 years, I worried constantly about him coming home safely. This is a dangerous job and I call upon the members of this committee to support the legislation, so crew members and their loved ones can breathe a little easier knowing this additional safeguard is in place.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide this sponsor testimony; I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have for me today.

**132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly Committee Assignments:**

Economic Development, Commerce & Labor, Ranking Member  
Health  
Transportation & Public Safety

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