

## 81st House District

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## James Hoops State Representative

Chairman McClain, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Grim, fellow Members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 372, “Stop, Look, Listen.” I would like to thank Representative Grim for agreeing to be a joint sponsor on this important safety legislation about railroad crossing laws pertaining to motorists’ responsibilities at railroad crossings.

This legislation addresses maintenance of way, railroad contractors and other on-track equipment that are not included in state statute that mandates a motorist’s responsibilities when approaching a crossing. In other words, when the gates are down, when there is a train approaching, or a flagman or stop sign is present, a motorist is responsible to stop, look, and listen before moving over the crossing.

The issue is on-track maintenance equipment has evolved into “train like” machines that present the same dangers of a train engine/train-with-cars of not being able to stop on a dime.

The fix is easy and is supported by rail labor, the railroads themselves, and railroad contractors. In fact, I have found no opposition because it is truly a public safety issue. The fix is a simple language change with no additional cost to ODOT, the public, or rail operators. We would simply insert, “or other on-track equipment” into current law anywhere it says, “when a train is approaching”.

I’ve mentioned this once in a press release that was sent out earlier this month, but it is important to understand that this legislation aims to raise awareness about the dangers of crossing tracks in front of heavy equipment used for track repair. The intent of this legislation is NOT to put a message out there that ‘we are going to get you’ but is intended to be a proactive measure to ensure safety.

This is truly a public safety issue. Ohioans understand trains occupy the tracks in their respective neighborhoods, but not everyone is aware of the on-track maintenance and construction machines that travel on the track infrastructure in our country. To ensure motorists are safe at rail crossings, we must clarify that there are other pieces of equipment that travel on railroad tracks and present the same dangers to motorists as trains do.

This bill passed the house as House Bill 190 in the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly with a unanimous 92-0 vote. This bill was also introduced in the 133rd General Assembly as House Bill 226 and it passed the House in a unanimous 94-0 vote. My hope is that we can finally get this bill across the finish line, and we will finally join over half the nation in getting on board with this commonsense fix.

Thank you, Chairman McClain, Vice Chairman Dobos, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the Transportation committee. I would like to step aside and allow my Joint Sponsor, Representative Grim speak about the importance of this rail safety legislation.