



Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Ohio State Legislative Board

A Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference

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Ohio Senate – Transportation Committee October 21, 2025 Meeting Testimony of John Esterly

Good morning, Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee. My name is John Esterly and I serve as the Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, a division of the Teamsters Rail Conference. Collectively, we represent over 5,000 active and retired rail workers in Ohio at our state's four largest railroads. Our highest calling is the safety of our members and the general public, so I am honored to offer testimony today in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 8 which urges Congress to pass H.R. 971 – The Reducing Accidents in Locomotives (RAIL) Act.

On February 3, 2023, Ohio became the epicenter of the discussion on rail safety when Norfolk Southern train 32N derailed in East Palestine. Our Ohio Legislature acted quickly, passing common sense rail safety provisions that addressed appropriate crew size, wayside defect detectors, and transparency in hazardous materials shipments. Most of these provisions were subsequently recommended by the NTSB in their final report on the derailment.

Unfortunately, despite our action in Ohio, Congress has yet to take meaningful action on rail safety. Then Senators Vance and Brown introduced the Rail Safety Act of 2023 (S. 576) which became the gold standard in the 118th Congress with bipartisan support but was never taken up for a formal vote. The RAIL Act mirrors that language, and has the support of members of the Ohio Congressional delegation including Congressman Mike Rulli whose district includes East Palestine. We expect a Senate companion to the RAIL Act to be introduced soon, also with bipartisan support.

This resolution sends a message to Congress that rail safety is still a priority to Ohioans. The rail industry is evolving at a record pace, and it is vital that the safety of communities with rail activity are safe. Changes in operations, new technology, and recent talk of industry consolidation are all exciting – our industry is moving into a new chapter. The RAIL Act ensures that sensible guardrails are in place for this evolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, Chair Patton. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.