

**As Introduced**

**136th General Assembly**

**Regular Session**

**2025-2026**

**H. B. No. 851**

**Representatives Grim, Pizzulli**

**Cosponsors: Representatives Piccolantonio, Synenberg, McNally, Bryant Bailey,  
Brewer, Rogers**

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To enact section 4955.37 of the Revised Code to 1  
establish "Safe Zones" on railroad tracks for 2  
the safety of railroad employees and to name 3  
this act the Paul Payne Safe Zone Act. 4

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:**

**Section 1.** That section 4955.37 of the Revised Code be 5  
enacted to read as follows: 6

**Sec. 4955.37.** (A) As used in this section: 7

(1) "Obstruction" includes scrap, lumber, debris, 8  
vegetation that exceeds four inches in height, marked unevenness 9  
of terrain, buildings, structures, or any other material or 10  
condition which endangers a railroad employee. 11

(2) "Railhead" means the rounded uppermost part of a rail. 12

(3) "Railroad" has the same meaning as in section 4907.02 13  
of the Revised Code. 14

(4) "Safe zone" means the immediate area surrounding 15  
railroad tracks with the following parameters: 16

(a) A vertical distance of twenty-two feet and six inches 17

from the top of the railhead; 18

(b) A horizontal distance of fifteen feet in either 19  
direction from the center line of the railroad track; 20

(c) When occupied by railroad equipment in motion, a 21  
horizontal distance of not less than thirty feet in either 22  
direction from the center line of the railroad track when the 23  
track speed is ten miles per hour or less; 24

(d) When occupied by railroad equipment in motion, a 25  
horizontal distance of not less than fifty feet in either 26  
direction from the center line of the railroad track that 27  
includes a direct means of evacuating the area when the track 28  
speed is greater than ten miles per hour. 29

(5) "Substandard clearance" means an obstruction within 30  
the safe zone parameters provided in division (A) (4) of this 31  
section. 32

(B) A railroad shall ensure that each safe zone under the 33  
railroad's control remains clear of all obstructions in order to 34  
ensure the safety of any person that is actively operating, 35  
conducting maintenance, or performing any other task within the 36  
scope of that person's duties within the safe zone. If an 37  
obstruction cannot reasonably be removed from a safe zone by a 38  
railroad, the railroad, upon approval from the public utilities 39  
commission, shall install a sign that warns railroad employees 40  
of a substandard clearance. 41

(C) The public utilities commission shall conduct periodic 42  
inspections of safe zones to ensure compliance with this 43  
section. Inspections may be unannounced. 44

The commission also may conduct such an inspection after 45  
receiving a complaint of a safe zone violation. 46

<u>(D) (1) If the commission receives a complaint, both of the</u>	47
<u>following may attend the inspection with the commission:</u>	48
<u>(a) A designated representative of the person making the</u>	49
<u>complaint;</u>	50
<u>(b) A representative of the railroad that controls the</u>	51
<u>safe zone and that is the subject of the complaint.</u>	52
<u>(2) Personal protective equipment shall be worn during all</u>	53
<u>inspections and any safety rules of the railroad shall be</u>	54
<u>followed by those making or accompanying the inspection.</u>	55
<u>(E) Whoever violates this section shall be fined not less</u>	56
<u>than one hundred dollars or more than five hundred dollars for</u>	57
<u>each violation. Each day of a continued violation is a separate</u>	58
<u>offense.</u>	59
<u>(F) The commission may adopt rules in accordance with</u>	60
<u>Chapter 119. of the Revised Code in order to implement and</u>	61
<u>administer this section.</u>	62
<b>Section 2.</b> This act shall be known as the Paul Payne Safe	63
Zone Act.	64