



**Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan
58th House District**

**Representative Jon Cross
83rd House District**

**House Bill 226 Sponsor Testimony
Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee
Wednesday, February 5, 2020**

Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 226 (HB 226), “Stop, Watch, and Listen for On-Track Equipment at Rail Crossings.” I would like to thank Representative Cross for agreeing to be a joint sponsor on this important safety legislation pertaining to motorists’ responsibilities and railroad crossing laws. Very similar legislation has been passed in in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Montana, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming and others, totaling 29 states.

This legislation addresses maintenance of way, railroad contractors and other on-track equipment not included in state statute that mandate 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, watch 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. This legislation passed the House unanimously because it is truly a public safety issue and the fix is simple language: “or other on-track equipment” being inserted into current law anywhere it says “when a train is approaching”.

This change presents no cost to the state or ODOT, but leaving our law in its current form presents an enormous human cost. In the US in 2018, there were over 2000 collisions on railroad crossings and 270 deaths and 819 injuries, with 9 deaths in Ohio.

This is truly a public safety issue. Ohioans are well aware that 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.

In the last General Assembly, as HB 190, this legislative train-ride didn't reach its final destination. I hope in this GA, we are ticketed for safe travel throughout the state and can get on board with over half the nation in making this commonsense fix.

Thank you Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee. We will be glad to answer any questions you might have.