**Timothy Price Testimony on Ohio House Bill 186-Ohio Rail Safety Bill**

Good afternoon Chairman Green, Vice Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and the members of the House Transportation Committee. My Name is Timothy Price and I am the Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and when not functioning in that capacity I am a working locomotive engineer with over thirty years of railroad experience.

Today I will present my views as a representative, locomotive engineer and a resident of Ohio on House Bill 186. This legislation is broken into three key components which are a two-person crew on a freight train, blocked crossings, yard lighting, and yard walking stone. All four of these are critical for the safety, not only of railroad employees but also the people living in our communities.

As this legislation moves forward you will hear testimony opposing two-person freight train crews, with its opponents using catch phrases like “new technology” and “crew redundancy”. These are nothing more than cost cutting tag lines that puts employees and the public at risk. Technology is advancing in many industries including the rail industry, however no computer or satellite will be able to repair a train when it breaks down in your city, or cut a road crossing for emergency vehicles to pass through, or be a first responder when the unthinkable happens - a major train derailment in a populated area. A minimum of two persons on a freight train has been a standard since the Civil War - the second person on the locomotive is the safety net in rail operations. This Bill will save lives at no financial cost to Ohioans.

The issue of longer and slower trains has created another issue of inconvenience and frustration for the public here in Ohio-blocked road crossings. This legislation gives Ohio the opportunity to strengthen enforcement of blocked crossings. House Bill 186 will also give railroad companies incentive to keep road crossings clear - open for emergency vehicles, vehicles operating on roadways for business, and for the general public. Keeping trains moving safely is good for everyone.

The yard lighting and yard walking stone initiatives help provide safe working conditions, not only for the engineers and conductors on the train, but for other railroad employees such as the car repair department, locomotive service technicians, and management in the field. Additionally, these minimum safety requirements will protect third-party contractors that work with the railroads during the course of normal business and protects public first responders called for emergencies at or near rail properties. Statistically speaking, slip, trip, and fall injuries are the most common among railroad operating employees – this offers a commonsense protection against injury.

House Bill 186 mirrors similar legislation that has become law in thirteen other states, most recently Nevada in May of this year. Many neighboring states including Pennsylvania and Maryland are advancing similar bills forward in their respective legislatures. I want to thank the committee for allowing me to testify on House Bill 186 today and a special thank you to primary bill sponsors Brett Hillyer (R) and Michael Sheehy (D) for working together to get this critical rail safety bill moving in the Ohio House. I will answer any questions at this time.