**Opposition Testimony**

**House Transportation and Public Safety Committee**

**HB 186**

Good morning Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation Committee, my name is Charles McBride. I am currently employed by Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc. as the Director Of Safety & Compliance for the Midwest Region, headquartered here in Columbus. I am here to testify from a short line railroad perspective on House Bill 186.

Previously, I was the General Manager of the Indiana & Ohio Railway Company, with overall responsibility for this Ohio-based 500-mile short line railroad. Prior to being General Manager on the I&O, I held roles of regional safety manager on the Ohio Valley Region, trainmaster and Assistant General Manager on the Ohio Central Railroad, and spent 11 years at CSX in variety of transportation capacities. Over my 17 year career, I’ve worked as a conductor, engineer, yardmaster, and manager.

Genesee & Wyoming is a leader in railroad safety. Our Core Purpose: To be the safest and most respected transportation service provider in the world. G&W controlled operations in Ohio have 7 total FRA reportable injuries from January 2018 through July of 2019, none of which have any correlation to these items. Here in Ohio, we have 11 rail switching yards currently in regular operation and several locations where switching is done across the railroads.

Through safety committees and employee involvement in our safety culture, potential safety concerns are identified, assessed, evaluated, prioritized and action plans formulated. Our employees are provided with instructions on how to report safety concerns. They are empowered to work safely and be their brother’s keeper.

While it is certainly difficult to put a price on safety, our company invests in providing a safe working environment for our employees. The company, through our safety processes, purchases and provides to the employees or installs in the field safety equipment and materials, and also makes changes or improvements to infrastructure. Laws such as H.B. 186 could force small short line railroads with limited budgets to spend operating and capital dollars on items that are not causing employee injuries and incidents and thus divert these dollars away from investments that are identified as needed safety tools or improvements. This could actually have a negative effect on railroad short line safety.

Where lighting or walkways are deemed to be a priority, we work to make such investments.

As an example, we recently obtained a quote to install yard lighting and walking ballast at a switching yard here in Ohio. The cost estimate is $420,000.00 for lighting and $31,846.30 (per 1000’) for ballast.



Once lighting is installed, the maintenance activities include changing light bulbs at the top of tall poles. While this is done a safely as possible, it requires a worker to access the lighting fixture.

Walkways around switching yards are inspected and maintained for safe footing, realizing these areas are subject to weather conditions and associated erosion, snow, ice and rain impacts. Employees are empowered to avoid unsafe conditions during their shift and to report concerns to their manager, the train dispatcher, or through their safety committee. As with the lighting requirement of H.B 186, forced investment in walkways that may not be a true safety priority, will decrease funds available to invest in the safety needs of our short line railroads.

Through our company boot program, employees are provided with boots which must be leather, lace up, composite/steel toed, minimum 6 inches high on ankle/calf, have a defined heel of not more than 1 ¼ inches, and have oil resistant soles. Employees are also issued special railroad lanterns with batteries and light bulbs which must produce a minimum of 150 lumens that are used in areas that need additional illumination. We also allow the use of headlamps as long as they are accompanied with an approved lantern. In addition, our company provides highly visible clothing, such as vests, hats, and gloves to employees who work in and around rail switching yards.

In summary, our company opposes H.B. 186, as written, as it could put undue burden and costs on small short line railroads and potentially reduce safety investments on the high priority safety needs of our employees.

Thank you for your time.