



May 23, 2023

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 600,000 active and retired members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), **I urge you to support the bipartisan Railway Safety Act (S. 576) as amended and approved days ago by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.**

There is an urgent need to improve freight rail safety following the tragic derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. Today, there are more than 1,000 train derailments each year in the U.S., and most have the ability to devastate a community just like East Palestine. That's why we have to act, because, as NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy mentioned following the East Palestine incident: "This was 100% preventable. We call things accidents. There is no accident. Every single event that we investigate is preventable." Therefore, it falls on our elected leaders to reform the current railroad safety practices so that rate of derailments once again begins trending down. It is indeed past time for heightened safety reforms to be made, both for the safety of rail workers and the communities where freight trains travel.

As you may know, the IAM was founded as a railroad union in 1888, and we represent more than 35,000 railroad workers across the country. These members include the IAM's original craft, the locomotive Machinists, as well as various rail crafts represented by our merged affiliated, the Transportation Communications Union (TCU) and their Brotherhood of Railway Carmen Division (BRC).

We support the Railway Safety Act because it will dramatically enhance rail safety in a number of ways. For our members specifically, the bill prohibits the railroads from placing impossible time constraints on rail car and locomotive inspectors, as detailed in the Wall Street Journal's front page expose on March 30th, 2023.¹ The bill would also require more frequent locomotive and rail car safety inspections, while ensuring that these inspections are performed as intended: by highly trained and qualified personnel.

The Class 1 railroads will claim they can't abide by these modest, commonsense safety reforms. However, all of the safety inspection reforms are simply process clarifications and/or improvements of existing regulations with which the railroads should already be in compliance. I urge you not to subscribe to the railroads' argument.

¹ Esther Fung, Kris Maher, and Paul Berger, "'Hurry Up and Get It Done': Norfolk Southern Set Railcar Safety Checks at One Minute," *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/railroads-are-a-lot-more-efficient-are-they-also-less-safe-7c5d2a60?st=83c817haup49v5d&reflink=desktopwebshare_permlink.

By putting in place the stronger inspection requirements included in this bill, you are simply ensuring that skilled craftsmen who have trained for years to reach journeyman status are the ones actually performing the work for which they were trained, rather than separate unqualified crafts or a contractor that took a 2-hour iPad course.

As an elected official whose state or district likely includes communities that freight trains pass through, I believe it's in the interest of you and your constituents to hold our nation's locomotives and rail cars to the highest possible safety standards, and I believe that these commonsense reforms in the Railway Safety Act will do just that.

Again – I urge your support for improving freight rail safety in the U.S., by supporting the Railway Safety Act as amended and passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Martinez, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "M".

Robert Martinez, Jr.
IAM International President