



June 13, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Leaders:

On behalf of the National Governors Association (NGA), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo), **we urge your support of S. 576, the *Railway Safety Act of 2023*, which would help ensure rail moves more safely through our communities.** In light of recent devastating freight train derailments, we strongly believe that now is the time for Congress to act and pass S. 576 which makes significant strides toward improving railway safety.

Due to the increasing length of trains and, therefore, the consolidation of hazardous materials to more of these trains, each of the more than 1,164 derailments is a threat to the economic competitiveness of our cities and states. The impacts of toxic train derailments, like what occurred in East Palestine, Ohio, are both short-term and long-term. Even with support and remediation, communities with hazardous derailments events may never fully recover economically.

Congress can alleviate these economic risks to our country with S. 576. Additionally, as local officials grapple with daily, hours-long blocked crossings, freight trains continue to grow longer – only worsening the issue. We appreciate policymakers' attention to reducing train delays that will help mitigate this problem. **Still, more should be done to protect states and local communities, some of whom must provide emergency services on both sides of a train track because of the frequency and severity of blocked at-grade crossings.**

Without Congress' help to secure passage of this bipartisan legislation, the U.S. Department of Transportation and state and local governments cannot move forward important oversight actions nor identify the full threat for our first responders. Each derailment is a potential disaster, and Congress should not wait any longer to act on bipartisan rail safety legislation that addresses key rail issues using reasonable and clear solutions.

The safe and efficient operation of the freight rail industry is key for the economic competitiveness of the country, and as state and local government partners, we stand ready to work with you to ensure this American institution operates as it should. **NGA, NLC, and NACo thank you for your leadership in stewarding our national transportation and infrastructure network and respectfully ask you to support S. 576 and pass rail safety legislation in the 118th Congress.**

Sincerely,

Matthew D. Chase
CEO & Executive Director
National Association of Counties

Clarence E. Anthony
CEO & Executive Director
National League of Cities

Bill McBride
Executive Director
National Governors
Association