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Finance Committee

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert
Counties' Senate Delegation



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Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable
Senate Bill 855: Maryland Railway Safety Act of 2025

February 25, 2025

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I, Senator Ellis, am introducing Senate Bill 855 entitled, "Railroads - Safety Requirements (Maryland Railway Safety Act of 2025)" to improve railroad safety for railroad employees and communities in Maryland.

Senate Bill 855 adds new safety requirements to Maryland law to ensure employees and communities are safe while freight trains are operating. Current law provides some important requirements to protect employees' health, such as requiring the railroad company to provide basic amenities like a fixed seat with back support or electric marker lights at the rear of each caboose.¹ Senate Bill 855 would expand these requirements to further protect employee safety by requiring new policies and a reporting system. Some of these new policies include requiring a crew of at least two individuals in order to operate a freight train in Maryland and creating civil penalties for violations of policies by the company. This requirement to have at least two individuals operating certain types of trains tracks well with current federal regulations and law under the Federal Railroad Administration.²

¹ See, Maryland Statute Art. Labor and Employment, § 5.5–110(a) and (c)(2) (additional protections are included in sections b and d of this statute as well).

² 49 CFR § 218.123(b): General Train Crew Size Safety Requirements (available at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-II/part-218>) (this regulation was proposed on July 28, 2022 and is in the code of federal regulations as of February 25, 2025).

The new reporting requirement that Senate Bill 855 adds will protect communities near railroads by ensuring that transportation of hazardous materials and waste in Maryland is reported to specific entities like the Maryland Department of Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This requirement is critical as one 2023 CBS News investigation and article noted that local officials are often not aware of the exact hazardous chemicals that may be being transported through their communities at any given time.³ The investigation further notes that in the past decade, Class 3 flammable liquids were involved in 14 incidents on railways in Maryland.⁴ Senate Bill 855 will allow federal and state-level tracking of these hazardous chemicals to ensure safe transportation and management response throughout the state of Maryland.

The additions to Maryland law that Senate Bill 855 requires will help to ensure railroad employees and the communities near railroads are safe throughout Maryland. Thank you for your consideration and we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 855.

Sincerely,



Arthur Ellis

³ Mike Hellgren, *WJZ Investigates: Dangerous Chemicals Transported Through Maryland with No Public Notice*, CBS News (May 10, 2023 12:29 PM EDT), <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/wjz-investigates-dangerous-chemicals-transported-through-maryland-with-no-public-notice/>.

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