

My name is Shawna Myron, a wife of a railroad engineer with over 20 years of service, and I wish to speak in favor of SB-723. In short, this is a common-sense bill that would maintain two-people in the cab of a locomotive for the railroad companies that transport large volumes of very hazardous cargo in Oregon. My husband joined the railroad after his military service and at that time, we had one child. Since then, we've raised a total of four children. The railroad job has taken him away from our family many days, nights, weekends, and holidays. We have had to navigate the highs and lows of life while he adhered to a very unpredictable and volatile schedule, many times taking him away from us for days at a time with almost no notice. But he remained committed not only to our family, but to his railroad company as a Switchman, Conductor, and Engineer.

I have seen firsthand the struggles and toll this career has taken on him: the fatigue of him doing his best balancing his demanding work and home life; the heartache of missing some of life's big events like his children's birthdays; the surprise call at 9pm when it was supposed to be 9am the next morning which required him to stay up all night, often over 24 hours at a time due to the railroad's inability to give him proper notice of when to rest... I could go on. As I said, my husband has worked hard to move this state and nation's freight for over two decades, including through the pandemic as an essential employee. The only time he took off during the pandemic was when he himself contracted covid, and as soon as he recovered, he went right back to work. But he couldn't do it alone. It required two people to get the job done, him and the Conductor he was working with.

Countless times he has relayed the harrowing stories that only a railroader acquires. I have heard it all: from him or co-workers hitting pedestrians or vehicles; having to cut a train from a crossing to allow emergency vehicles to cross; responding to hazardous spills in our communities; having two sets of eyes in the cab watching out for hazards; simply to helping each other stay awake and safely move the train while battling fatigue due to the volatility of their schedule. One story has always stood out, and that's when one of his friends who is an engineer suffered a heart attack. It was the quick reaction of the conductor to get the train under control, quickly perform life-saving CPR, and direct emergency crews on how to quickly access their location. It was because there were two people in the cab that my husband's friend is alive today. In every scary situation my husband can share, it was the collective effort of at least two-people working together that ended the story before it could have gotten much worse. He has even shared with me the technologies the railroads are using in terms of automation, and let me tell you, it's laughable. Please listen to a railroader, an actual railroader, in regards to train operating technology and not a lobbyist or railroad executive whose only job is to try and convince you it's safe to operate with fewer than two-people. They don't have the operating experience that those in the trenches have. I am married to a man of integrity; he will not lie to the realities of what it takes to operate trains safely and efficiently. His passion lies not only in his home for his family, but also on the rails where he works with some of the best people he has ever met. And he's ringing the alarm bell, so please listen, two people on trains are the absolute minimum we should expect. Not only for his safety, but that of his co-workers and the general public as well.

So I implore you... my children do... so does every family member of a railroad employee: please pass SB-723. This is adding nothing but keeping the status quo and saying that we as Oregonians have a say in public safety matters regarding railroads in the state of Oregon. We owe it to every railroad worker who works tirelessly to deliver our goods to keep two-people in the cab of a locomotive. Thank you.

Shawna Myron
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