



Joint Committee on Transportation

April 8, 2025

Co-chairs Gorsek and McLain and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today on Senate Bill 723. The Oregon Rail Users' League (ORULE) serves both public and private organizations that operate, use and support railroads in Oregon. ORULE advocates for the rights and needs of railroads and their customers and encourages economic growth for the state. ORULE provides a forum for businesses, local and state government, and railroads to come together to advocate for a crucial transportation mode that will hold an increasingly prominent place in the nation's transportation infrastructure as we move into the future.

Senate Bill 723 is unnecessary. The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) adopted a national rule last year, and Secretary Duffy has communicated intent to uphold the rule. If this rule were to be amended in the future, then the issue belongs at the collective bargaining table. The point of national bargaining is to ensure that there is clarity and consistency in rail workforce regulations and operations nationally. Class 1 freight rail runs through multiple states, and it does not make sense to have different rules in each state.

There is also no data supporting two-person crews are safer than one-person crews. Single-person crews are widely used on rail systems around the world and on many short line railroads and passenger trains in the U.S. The safety record of these railroads is equal to two-person operations.

Advanced technology provides safety oversight functions previously performed by crew members, and this technology enhances employee safety. The rail industry has a long history of investing capital and implementing technology, operating practices, equipment and infrastructure improvements to enhance safety and productivity. When such advancements have established a viable foundation for reconsideration of appropriate crew size, railroads will utilize the established collective bargaining process to negotiate with labor organizations. The industry must remain agile to incorporate the most current safety strategies and technological advancements into its operations.

The legislative crew size mandate in SB 723 lacks justification, creates inconsistent regulations across states, and disregards the freight rail industry's strong safety record and decades of collective bargaining.

ORULE respectfully requests your opposition to SB 723.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JD", is written below the word "Sincerely,".

Jenny Dresler, Executive Director
Oregon Rail Users' League (ORULE)