

4/8/2025 SB723

Thank you Co-Chair Gorsek and Co-Chair McLain and Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart-Davis and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Christine Baldwin and I am here to speak in favor of SB723.

I am here speaking as a member of the BLET Auxiliary but more importantly as a wife of an 20 year Engineer and the mother of a 7 year Engineer both work for Union Pacific out of La Grande. I depend on the second person in the cab to make sure my family makes it home safely from their shifts. I know that sounds very dramatic but it's really not at all.

Have you ever traveled I84 past Pendelton over Cabbage on your way to Idaho during the winter? The Train tracks do not run along the highway. They are located several miles in the mountains from the road. Once that train heads up the mountain they no longer have cell reception for about 60 miles. It is also almost impossible to get to a train stopped in that area with snow on the ground if they can even let UP know they are in distress. They have to count on that second crew member in an emergency. Those emergencies do happen.

My husband who was conductor at the time. His engineer was in control of the train and became confused, disoriented, pale and shaking. He told my husband he thought he was having a heart attack. The train was traveling 45 mph when my husband took control of the train and had to bring it to a stop and call for EMS. There is no way the Engineer could have done that on his own.

The crew are sometimes first responders to an accident. When looking out the front window of a locomotive you have a 20ft blind spot in front of you. My husband had a kid end his life in front of his train. He and the Engineer had no idea if they hit him or if he moved at the last minute. They stopped the train and one of them had to go check while the other started calling for EMS. You don't know how you will respond in a situation like that. They were there to support each other while waiting for help. There are other instances where the Engineer secures the train while the conductor is getting help for the people in a car they just hit. These are not uncommon situations.

There was a crew stopped at a crossing. When a man got out of his car and climbed the steps to the cab. No lock on the door of the cab. The Engineer held the door closed while the conductor called the police. With one person in the cab, you either hold the door closed or call the police. How knows what would have happened if he got in the cab. And this happens frequently.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.