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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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TO: Chairs McLain and Gorsek  
Vice-Chairs  
Members of the Committee  
FR: Catie Theisen, Oregon AFL-CIO  
RE: SB 723 Support

April 8, 2025

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 723 to help ensure the workers who operate trains running through our state can do so safely, efficiently, and reliably.

Oregon's railroads carry millions of tons of goods and products every year, spanning 2,344 track miles, 1865 public highway grade crossings and amounts to \$241 billion of commodities carried by rail in 2016 alone. The workers who make our trains run are critical to this transportation and – like every worker – they deserve every assurance possible to come home from work safely each and every day.<sup>1</sup>

SB 723 does just that: help make sure that Oregon use every tool in our toolbox to support the safety of this important infrastructure, both for Oregonians at large and for the rail workers operating these trains. SB 723 simply requires that trains operate with a 2 person crew, something that has already been mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration but is being contested in the courts by some rail employers. 12 states have already passed similar legislation to SB 723.

There are several key reasons why a train should have a two-person crew instead of relying on a single operator: Having two crew members on board allows for a quicker and more coordinated response to emergencies. In situations like sudden medical issues, mechanical failures, unexpected obstacles on the tracks, collisions at crossings, or derailments, one crew member can handle the immediate problem while the other crew member can communicate with dispatch and coordinate any necessary emergency vehicles to ensure public, crew and cargo safety.

Railway operations often involve complex situations such as navigating through towns with multiple crossings or dense traffic or pedestrian crossings, rural crossings prone to heavy truck or farm implement traffic, dealing with adverse weather conditions, or managing delays. A two-person crew can work together to solve these issues more effectively than a single operator, ensuring that the train remains on schedule and passengers are kept informed. A two-person crew can divide responsibilities, allowing for more efficient operations. While one person focuses on driving and monitoring the controls, the other can handle navigation, communication with dispatch, and ensuring adherence to schedules.

These are just some of the many reasons a two-person crew is the responsible thing to do in Oregon – both for the workers who we rely on and for public safety and infrastructure at large. SB 723 is an opportunity to ensure Oregon help rail workers as federal attacks and uncertainty continue. We encourage your support of SB 723.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/RPTD%20Document%20Library/Oregon%20Rail%20Planning%20Info%20Sheet.pdf>