



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

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KENNETH W. COOPER
International President

PAUL A. NOBLE
International
Secretary-Treasurer

June 5, 2023

VIA EMAIL

To: All Members of the United States Congress

Re: Freight Rail Workforce Health and Safety Act

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the 820,000 active and retired members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I write in support of H.R. 3255, the Freight Rail Workforce Health and Safety Act, introduced by Congressman Donald Payne. Given the continued predatory conduct of Class I railroads, this ground-breaking legislation is timely and necessary.

The IBEW is a labor organization representing approximately 12,000 members who work in the freight, commuter, and passenger rail industries. These highly skilled members perform an essential role in locomotive, railcar, and infrastructure maintenance and inspection, making the railroads and their surrounding communities a safer place to live and work.

In an industry with unreasonable attendance policies that penalize workers who take time off, railroad employees are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These workers should be entitled to medical leave, regular weekend schedules, and sufficient time off to decompress and engage in family activities. Under the circumstances, they are frequently forced to work ill, which is hazardous not only for employees and those they could infect but also for all Americans as trains pass through nearly every community in the country.

This bill would permit rail workers to take seven days of paid sick leave for unforeseen circumstances such as illness, injury, medical condition, preventative care, caring for a child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner, and treating any related physical or psychological injury. It would hold carriers accountable for unjust retaliation for the first time for not allowing a worker to take sick leave.

Railroad employees perform an essential service, as the industry serves nearly every agricultural, industrial, wholesale, retail, and resource-based sector of the U.S. economy. Operating over a nearly 140,000-mile network in 49 states, freight cargo trains serve every community in the country, exposing nearly the entire population to the potentially dangerous consequences of derailments like earlier this year in East Palestine, Ohio.



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Like all American workers, freight rail workers deserve to be regarded with respect. Employers in the railroad industry should provide competitive benefits that promote secure working conditions and a healthy work-life balance to attract and retain qualified, professional employees.

The IBEW urges every U.S. House of Representatives member to stand with railroad workers and cosponsor the Freight Rail Workforce Health and Safety Act. In recognition of the critical role that railroad workers play in American society, I remain hopeful for the future of bipartisan rail safety legislation. These workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and providing them with paid sick leave is an essential step in that direction.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kenneth W. Cooper".

Kenneth W. Cooper
International President

KWC:efw

