

May 15, 2023

Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Railway Safety Act of 2023

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

The Intermodal Association of North America (“IANA”) is North America’s leading industry trade association representing the combined interests of the intermodal freight industry. IANA’s membership roster of over 1,000 corporate members includes intermodal and over-the-road motor carriers, railroads (Class I, short-line, and regional), water carriers, stacktrain operators, port authorities, intermodal marketing and logistics companies, and suppliers to the industry such as equipment manufacturers, intermodal leasing companies, and consulting firms. IANA’s associate (non-voting) members include shippers (defined as the beneficial owners of the freight to be shipped), academic institutions, government entities, and non-profit associations. IANA’s mission is to promote the growth of safe and efficient intermodal freight transportation through innovation, education, and dialogue.

Unlike single transportation modes, intermodal freight supply chains are comprised of distinct service providers that work in concert to complete intermodal movements. Each link is a vital component of the overall intermodal supply chain and must operate seamlessly and efficiently in order to uphold systemwide performance and productivity levels. Railroad operators are one such critical service provider in the interconnected intermodal supply chain.

Naturally, ensuring safe rail transportation is of paramount importance to IANA. After all, IANA’s members live in the communities served by rail, and the success of the intermodal industry is dependent upon the safe transportation of cargo. Indeed, intermodal rail transportation is particularly safe. For instance, 99.9 percent of hazardous materials reach their destination without any release caused by a train accident. Despite recent headlines, an already strong safety record on the nationwide rail network continues to improve due to railroads’ robust investments in infrastructure and technology. In fact, newly released 2022 Federal Railroad Administration train accident data indicates that both the mainline train accident rate as well as the hazardous materials accident rate are at an all-time national low.

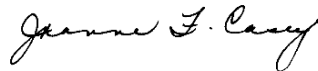
As Congress debates rail safety legislation, IANA urges you to evaluate carefully whether any data demonstrates that a given policy would actually improve safety and reduce accidents. For example, several provisions currently under consideration regarding train consist and length, crew size, and operating practices not only remain entirely untested but fail to recognize the day-to-day realities of intermodal operations as well as potential unintended consequences. Such provisions are not supported by data and would likely disrupt industry modernization, competition, and efficiency. Moreover, many of these provisions are unrelated to the recent derailments and redundant with regulatory actions already underway.

In short, while IANA vigorously promotes rail safety, IANA also opposes legislation that substantially changes the current laws under which freight railroads operate without attendant safety benefits.

Railroads have upheld stringent safety standards, voluntarily employed various safety measures, and maintained strong safety records. Overall, new burdens on the railroad industry that are not directly linked to safety improvements will adversely impact the industry's ability to make critical investments in safety technologies as well as other innovations necessary to remain competitive and to address customer needs.

IANA appreciates your consideration of its views as well as your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you toward our shared goal of enhancing intermodal supply chain safety, reliability, and efficiency. Please let me know if you or your staff would like to discuss our position in further detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joanne F. Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing "J" and "C".

Joanne F. Casey  
President and CEO  
Intermodal Association of North America