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Mr. Martin J. Oberman, Chairman
United States Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Chairman;

As the State Senator representing the communities in Ohio that were impacted by the recent Norfolk Southern derailment and resulting chemical exposure, I am deeply invested in the public policy decisions that shape the future of rail safety in the United States. The devastation caused by a single accident has called urgent attention to the need to strengthen rail safety – especially when it comes to the shipment of hazardous materials like vinyl chloride.

Regulatory measures intended to make the shipment of hazardous materials are one piece of this crucial equation, and I am eager to explore and support the development of such measures as the response to the disaster in East Palestine continues. Beyond reactive measures such as this, I am also focused on the steps that can be taken by bodies such as the Surface Transportation Board to pre-empt future threats to rail safety.

The East Palestine derailment was made particularly harmful by the fact that the derailed train was carrying hazardous materials. As noted, vinyl chloride was among the chemicals released by the incident. Typically used in applications like the manufacture of a number of items, including PVC water pipes, car parts and other common items, this substance is considered harmful to human health by researchers and has been linked to cancer and other adverse health outcomes.

The derailed Norfolk Southern train wasn't unique in carrying hazardous materials. And while such shipments are economically essential, the volume and oversight of hazardous material shipments must be carefully considered and managed. Regulatory measures that increase accountability and enable greater awareness and oversight of hazardous materials on the part of bodies like the Surface Transportation Board, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and others. Close collaboration with local public safety officials and elected representatives can help pave the way for improved preparedness, faster response in

the event of an accident, and improved overall safety for communities that host freight rail lines.

I also feel it is important that regulators train their focus squarely on the job of enhancing rail safety amid the ongoing disaster in Ohio. That means applying thorough scrutiny to actions that threaten to undermine rail safety rather than improving it. The proposed merger of Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern railways, for example, runs contrary to the timely national focus on rail safety.

The approval of this merger, according to its [environmental impact statement](#), will cause another two million tank cars of hazardous materials – just like the ones that derailed in East Palestine – to move across the merged rail lines. What’s more, reviews of the merger point to a substantially elevated risk of collision upon approval thanks in part to factors like increased traffic, congestion, train length, and more.

I have witnessed firsthand the impact a rail accident can have. I’ve watched as my constituents searched for answers and officials – both public and private – have struggled to provide those answers. I cannot, given what has happened in our community, support any action that would further undermine rail safety as I believe this merger would. We need the relevant federal regulators to take appropriate action to ensure tragedies like what we’ve seen in East Palestine do not occur again.

Thank you for your work to keep our railroads safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael A. Rulli". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Michael A. Rulli
33rd District
Ohio State Senate