



March 24, 2022

Dear Members of the House Transportation Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, representing 6,300 employers and their more than 500,000 employees across the state, we urge your opposition to HF 4323 (Frederick), requiring minimum crew size for rail carriers.

Minnesota businesses depend on a safe, reliable, and efficient multi modal transportation system to get their goods to market and their customers and employees to their door. The efficient movement of people and goods is an essential part of a strong economy. HF 4323 disrupts those efficiencies in several ways:

- **We support an efficient freight system that enhances Minnesota's economic competitiveness in national and international markets.** Crew size mandates would deter innovation and limit the competitive viability of freight railroads, which is contrary to national safety, economic, and transportation interests. Technology and modern staffing models can make freight railroads safer, more efficient, and more productive. Crew size mandates would hinder these improvements.
- **We support legislative and policy changes necessary to accommodate advancements in transportation technology.** A conversation of crew size mandates comes at a time when the Department of Transportation and nation generally have embraced regulatory flexibility and the idea that safety is advanced by encouraging, rather than stifling, technological innovations in transportation. While the country contemplates promoting the development and deployment of technological advancements around connected and autonomous vehicles and trucks to enhance safety and efficiency, this bill pulls Minnesota in an opposite direction, frustrating efforts to harness the benefits of technology to improve safety and efficiency in transportation.
- **We believe that employers are in the best position to develop wage and benefit packages that fit the distinctive needs of the companies and employees.** HF 4323 disrupts the long-standing collective bargaining process between railroads and their employees – a process that has built-in protections for employees, railroads and the movement of interstate commerce. This process has resulted in railroads having some of the highest paying jobs of any industry in the country and has served the industry well.

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce supports initiatives that allow for an efficient freight system, accommodate advancements in transportation technology, and allow employers to develop workforce guidelines and wage and benefit packages that meet the needs of their employees and their market. We are concerned that HF 4323 cuts against those goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bentley Graves", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Bentley Graves
Director, Health Care & Transportation Policy