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Protecting Essential Transportation Employees in the Workplace

Submitted by Delegates Mike Ciaccio, IBT Joint Council 25 and Robert Guy, SMART TD

WHEREAS, the Transportation sector employs millions of workers who move people and goods through the air, on the ground and by rail; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of the transportation sector to our nation's economy; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic, and the resulting shelter-in-place orders throughout the country, have exponentially increased our reliance on the shipment of goods; and

WHEREAS, our nation's food supply is entirely dependent upon transportation workers, including shipment of groceries to warehouses and stores; and

WHEREAS, millions of people rely on their school bus, public transportation and paratransit drivers for transportation every day in order to go about their daily lives; and

WHEREAS, trucking in the United States is a \$700 billion industry, with 3.5 million men and women working as truck drivers and another 5 million jobs connected to the trucking industry; and

WHEREAS, freight railroading in the United States supports nearly \$274 billion in annual economic activity and 165,000 U.S. freight rail employees also help support approximately 1.5 million jobs within industry partners such as agriculture, automotive, chemicals, construction, energy, intermodal and forest products, among others; and

WHEREAS, Commuter, Intercity and Long-distance passenger rail service provides average weekday ridership to millions of passengers throughout the country which allows, among other things, people to get to work, students to get to institutions of higher learning, rural connectivity to urban areas and added multi-modal mobility all while reducing congestion on our overburdened and fragile national highway system; and

WHEREAS, workers in the Transportation sector have been deemed essential throughout the country, continuing to work despite increased risk of exposure to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, increased risks posed by COVID-19 must be addressed to protect essential workers in the transportation sector to ensure the safe movement of goods and people; and

WHEREAS, essential transportation workers should receive priority testing for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases; and

WHEREAS, transportation employers should be required to clean, disinfect, and sanitize all equipment and facilities in accordance with guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including facilities used for employee training or the performance of indoor or outdoor maintenance, repair, or overhaul work; and

WHEREAS, transportation employers should be required to provide at-risk employees with personal protective and sanitizing equipment and training on its proper use; and

WHEREAS, transportation employers must establish guidelines, or adhere to any existing applicable guidelines, for notifying a worker of a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 with respect to any other employee with whom the notified employee had physical contact or a physical interaction; and

WHEREAS, passengers should be required to wear masks or protective face coverings while in or using a passenger transportation carrier or conveyance; and

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WHEREAS, passenger rail transportation employers should ensure that adequate law enforcement and security personnel provide visible and efficient support to help on-board operating employees interact with non-compliant, criminal and/or disorderly conduct of passengers; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no enforceable standard through the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) to ensure that essential transportation workers are protected from communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, State, local and federal governments must do their part to ensure that transportation employers are following applicable guidance from the CDC, in the absence of enforceable OSHA standards; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to the health of our nation's citizens, as well as our economy, to protect these workers; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Illinois AFL-CIO urges all of its affiliates to support efforts at the state, local and federal levels to provide improved and enforceable protections for essential transportation workers.