

March 26, 2026

Members of the United States Congress

United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

As Congress develops surface transportation legislation, the undersigned members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group urge lawmakers to pursue targeted, data-driven improvements to rail safety while avoiding concerning provisions contained in the Railway Safety Act (RSA) that could unintentionally disrupt agricultural supply chains.

America's farmers and agricultural businesses depend on a safe, reliable, and economically sustainable freight rail system to move crops, feed, fertilizer, biofuels, and other essential commodities across the country and to global markets. Railroads play a critical role in connecting rural production regions to domestic users, export terminals, and international customers.

Agriculture is already facing significant economic pressures. Policies that increase transportation costs or reduce the efficiency of the freight network would add additional strain to an already challenging environment for the agricultural economy.

For this reason, we are concerned about efforts to incorporate several provisions from RSA into transportation legislation. While we support targeted, common-sense steps to improve rail safety and prevent future derailments, some RSA provisions would impose significant federal mandates on freight rail operations despite the absence of evidence that they would meaningfully improve safety outcomes.

Provisions of concern include train length limits, expanded manual inspection requirements that could slow the adoption of advanced inspection technologies, and other operating mandates that could constrain network flexibility and capacity. Ensuring that demonstrated capability is available to maintain the timely and economic production of all types of new and retrofitted railcars, while also not disrupting existing tank car modernization schedules, is also a concern. Policies that interfere with efficient rail operations risk creating system-wide congestion, increasing transportation costs, and reducing service reliability for agricultural shippers.

These concerns are particularly significant for agriculture because rail is uniquely important for moving large volumes of bulk commodities over long distances. Many rural areas depend heavily on rail service to reach domestic markets and export facilities. Even operational changes that do not directly target agricultural shipments can still have

significant ripple effects across the broader rail network, affecting service levels and costs for agricultural producers and agribusinesses.

At the same time, we support several targeted measures that would strengthen rail safety while preserving the efficiency of the national freight network. These include expanding and standardizing the use of defect detection technology, supporting robust funding for first responder training, improving track maintenance programs, and ensuring adequate resources for hazardous materials emergency preparedness and response.

Freight rail safety has improved significantly over the past two decades, driven by private investment, technological innovation, and data-driven safety practices. As Congress considers rail policy, it is critical that new requirements be grounded in evidence and operational realities rather than one-size-fits-all mandates that risk undermining both safety and supply chain performance.

At a time when policymakers are focused on strengthening domestic production, supporting rural economies, and maintaining the global competitiveness of U.S. agriculture, Congress should avoid including concerning RSA provisions that could disrupt the transportation networks producers and agribusinesses rely upon every day.

We stand ready to work with Congress to advance policies that improve rail safety while preserving the reliability, capacity, and affordability of the freight transportation system that supports America's farmers and agricultural supply chains.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Feed Industry Association
AmericanHort
Growth Energy
International Fresh Produce Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Cotton Council
National Grain and Feed Association
North American Export Grain Association
North American Millers' Association
Pet Food Institute
Renewable Fuels Association
The Council of Producers & Distributors of Agrotechnology
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Rice
US Rice Producers Association