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To the PA House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee  
Testimony for the Committee Hearing 3/5/2014:

Re: Public Safety & Emergency  
Preparedness & the ramifications for the railway  
transportation of crude oil across the Commonwealth

To the honorable Committee Chair Barrar,

I have come to this meeting out of concern for my patients, most of whom live in Delaware County. I am a family physician, in my 25<sup>th</sup> year of practice in Broomall, PA. I am on the active staff at Delaware County Memorial Hospital, and teach at the Bryn Mawr Family Practice Residency Program in Lawrence Park.

Last July, a unit train carrying crude oil crashed in a town of 5900 people in Quebec, incinerating the downtown, killing 47, and gravely contaminating the town's land and water. Since then there have been at least half a dozen oil train crashes and derailments, including one last January less than a mile from U Penn's hospital complex. Many of these have involved massive fires and explosions.

I have read that the oil is being transported mainly in tanker cars not designed for explosive cargo, and prone to leak and rupture in a derailment or crash, and that, according to CSX's investigation of the Philadelphia derailment, "a maintenance crew had been replacing crossties on the bridge, and ...the crew did not follow engineering protocols, and failed to sufficiently anchor temporary fasteners to the ties." Furthermore, the only reason that the tank cars didn't leak or rupture in that incident was that they were not the usual, unsuitable type DOT-111. Finally, federal investigators have learned that workers in the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota deliberately misclassified the oil as less hazardous cargo so that it could be transported in the DOT-111 cars. The industry's proposal to reduce the risk to Philadelphia is to reroute the trains through Delaware County.

I am very concerned because many of my patients live in the towns and boroughs along the rail line traversed by these trains. Moreover, Crozer and Taylor hospitals overlook these lines as well, and as a result may be

unavailable for accident victims, and indeed may be in the evacuation zone. The recent history of oil transport by rail suggests that it's only a matter of time before one occurs in a metropolitan area such as ours. In the Quebec case, the railroad declared bankruptcy, leaving the costs to be borne by governments and individuals.

When I see a patient with symptoms of a heart attack, even if the chances are slim, I send them to the emergency room, applying the precautionary principle. Similarly, the impact of catastrophic oil-on-rail accident in our densely populated area is barely imaginable – so great a risk that the precautionary principle applies here as well:

For the sake of your constituents, my patients, until crude oil is transported exclusively in tank cars designed for such cargo, and standards for track maintenance, train operation, and general rail safety improve, I appeal to your Committee to halt oil-by-rail through metropolitan Philadelphia, including Delaware County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Wolk', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Wolk, MD