

# Written Testimony

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On behalf of the State Association for Transportation Insurance (SAFTI), I want to thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony to the Pennsylvania House Labor and Industry Committee's Subcommittee on Workers Compensation and Worker Protection on House Bill 2860.

My name is Eric Wolf, and I am the General Manager of Altoona Metro Transit (Amtran). I am also the volunteer board chair of the State Association for Transportation Insurance (SAFTI), a statewide transit industry insurance pool that has saved our members millions of dollars in insurance premiums while providing better insurance coverage and significant improvements in risk management practices and continuously lowering accidents, incidents, and most importantly costs.

Every day, our industry helps individuals and strengthens our communities. Our bus service helps people get where they need to go.

- We help working people get to their jobs.
- We help older people age in place instead of having to move out of their home.
- We help people with disabilities maintain their independence.
- We help college students get to class so that they can avoid the added expense of owning a car.

The safety of our customers and our employees are at the core of all transit agencies' daily concerns. For us, this "precious cargo" is an important reminder of our strong commitment to safety for each and every trip. That is the message I would like to convey to you today. Safety protocols and regulations are not a new concept for public transportation and our valued employees. Transit agencies across the Commonwealth operate under the most rigorous, industry-specific safety protocols and programs – more in fact than any other agency, municipal authority, or local government entity.

Transit is subject to a myriad of rules and regulations related to safety, health, the environment, and transportation under the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Department of Health, as well as the many complimentary agencies here in our Commonwealth.

For example, under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), we are required to comply with comprehensive Safety Management Systems, labor management safety committee to investigate workplace incidents, drug and alcohol programs, and much more. As an example of our commitment to safety and our efforts to go above and beyond, please note that the FTA ceded

the decision regarding a requirement for physicals for bus drivers to the states. Pennsylvania chose not to require this, but members of SAFTI *do* require physicals for bus drivers.

In addition to these comprehensive protocols, transit agencies routinely work together at the national and state level for continuing education, best practices, development and enforcement of modern safety rules and regulations, and methods to hold the industry responsible for the safety of our workforce and customers. Safety is what we do. We take it seriously, and we always will.

Twenty-six years ago, we created a workplace safety and collision prevention program called *SAFTI*. As the name implies, the members created these series of standards regarding safety and operational policies for injury and collision risk and prevention. SAFTI is an insurance pool, one with standards more rigorous than federal and state regulatory agencies require. We manage accident trends. We require retraining based upon those trends. We also track “near misses” and use that information as teachable moments – adjusting our training and best practices.

SAFTI as an insurance cooperative, maintains data on all workplace losses and severity. Such data tracks incidents across the membership. We respectfully request your consideration to allow for insurance cooperatives, like SAFTI, to report worker safety data on behalf its members should House Bill 2860 move forward.

At my agency new drivers get 4 weeks or 160 hours of training before they drive a bus in revenue service. And that is if they already have the Commercial Driver’s License. If we have to train them to get their CDL, it is an additional two weeks on top of the four weeks.

In SAFTI, each member holds the others accountable. This risk management mitigation has resulted in enhanced safety practices and protocols with expenses 30%-50% less than private sector options due to the minimized losses. As a result of our SAFTI program, we continue to perform better than the industry averages regarding workplace fatalities, injuries, and illnesses.

Perhaps the most impressive statistic is that since SAFTI’s inception, in the last 25 years, we have only experienced ONE workplace fatality— a statistically significant note for consideration.

According to national statistics, from 2016-2019, there were 288 workplace fatalities in the transit and ground transportation industry. In 2019, there were 5,333 workplace fatalities across all industries.

To put it another way, we have experienced 1 fatality in over 138 million work hours. By OSHA statistics, the average for public transportation across the country is 40 workplace fatalities over the same time period for the same work hours.

Compared to other industries, we should be experiencing 1.6 fatalities per year, not one single fatality over a 26-year period.

In costs per \$100 of driver payroll, we have reduced the loss number by two-thirds over 25 years – which means we have both less frequency and severity of the incidents within SAFTI member's workforce.

I am exceptionally proud of the success of our program and what it has done to protect the health and well-being of those who work in public transportation and those who benefit from our services. As an industry, we continue to prioritize safety and the adherence to the extensive, industry-specific regulations as well as the policies and best practices of our own effective programs.

On behalf of the members of SAFTI, as well as the transit industry across Pennsylvania, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss workplace safety. It is our sincere hope this information conveys the vastness of our commitment to safety. If we may be of service in your deliberations, please consider us a resource for the Committee.