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Via Hand Delivery & E-Mail Attachment

The Honorable Jason Sheppard
Chairman, House Government Operations Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Re: CSX Support – HB 5861

Dear Chairman Sheppard, Majority Vice-Chair Cole, Minority Vice-Chair Greig and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent support of HB 5861, a measure to establish a state sponsored grade separation program in Michigan.

As background, CSX provides freight rail service to customers across 23 states and over 21,000 miles of privately owned track, including major industries and customers across Michigan. The CSX network in Michigan also includes over 1,300 public, at-grade crossings. As our customers' business needs have changed, the demand for rail service has led to increasing conflicts at public, at-grade crossings. This is becoming a growing concern for local communities.

CSX has been able to make operational or service adjustments in some cases to assist in mitigating the impacts at public, at-grade crossings. However, those options are limited and the end result is an ongoing conflict between safe railroad service and the traveling public.

The issue is simply that there are too many public, at-grade crossings on the rail network in Michigan to completely eliminate these conflicts while providing needed freight rail service to Michigan employers. In other words, as long as a grade crossing exists it runs a risk of being impacted through the normal course of safe railroad operations.

The real solution to limit the impacts at public, at-grade crossings would be to reduce the overall number of crossings on the rail networks in Michigan. This could be accomplished in a number of ways, but the most effective would be to close permanently the at-grade crossing to vehicular traffic or construct a grade separation to eliminate the conflict between motorists and safe rail service.

It is important to note that conflicts at public, at-grade crossings are public matters to be addressed by public agencies. HB 5861 acknowledges the public issue and embraces this responsibility to provide a safety focused and innovative program to provide a permanent solution to these conflicts in Michigan.

Furthermore, HB 5861 provides a flexible framework to craft innovative partnerships between public, private and non-profit entities to address these conflicts at public, at-grade crossings. CSX routinely works with public agencies across our entire network to address issues at grade crossings, including the development of grade separations. Our team stands ready to do the same here in Michigan with the enactment of HB 5861.

CSX encourages favorable consideration of HB 5861.