

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

JAMES P. HOFFA
General President

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001



KEN HALL
General Secretary-Treasurer

202.624.6800
www.teamster.org

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 24, 2020

The Hon. Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
United States Senate, Russell SOB 317
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate, Hart SOB 322
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives, H 222
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives, H 204
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of over 70,000 railroad workers comprising the Teamsters Rail Conference—and their unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED)—I would first like to express our appreciation for efforts by Congress to mitigate economic harm caused by the public health measures necessary to slowing the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. I write specifically today concerning changes being discussed regarding payment of benefits to railroad workers pursuant to the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA).

Unlike many American workers, railroad employees do not receive unemployment benefits through state-administered unemployment insurance programs. Instead, unemployed railroad workers receive RUIA benefits—covering both unemployment (“unemployment benefits”) and sickness/injury/disability (“sickness benefits”)—through a program that is administered by the United States Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Thus, Congressional efforts to assist state-run unemployment plans provide no relief to railroad workers who are unable to work during the pandemic. For this reason, it is critical that the following items remain incorporated in this package:

- The same increase and extension of RUIA benefits that are proposed for standard unemployment programs, and the funds to provide these benefits.

DENNIS R. PIERCE, President — Teamsters Rail Conference
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131 • phone (216) 241-2630
Computer-Generated Letterhead

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- A waiver of the seven-day waiting period for both unemployment benefits and sickness benefits, as well as funding to pay for this waiver.
- Administrative funding for RRB to administer the RUIA program, with a proposed funding level of \$10 million as contained in the House bill currently under consideration.
- The rescission of sequestration requirements set forth in the Budget Control Act of 2011 applicable to RUIA benefits, which cause an artificial reduction in unemployment benefits, below statutorily provided amounts.

Thank you for your time and most serious consideration.

Respectfully,



National President

cc: James P. Hoffa, IBT General President
Ken Hall, IBT General Secretary-Treasurer
John F. Murphy, IBT Vice President and Rail Conference Director
Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee