



Rail Labor Division

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

On behalf of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA), the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and the Rail Labor Division (RLD) of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), we write in support of funding for the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) in the fiscal year (FY) 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill at \$148.371 million. Based on the RRB's FY 2022 budget submission and taking into account what the agency received from H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan, this modest funding request will ensure the agency is able to meet the needs of our nation's railroad workers and their families. Additionally, annual appropriations to the RRB come directly from the agency's own trust funds that are funded solely by employer and employee payroll taxes—not the general revenue.

As authorized by the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts, the RRB is an independent agency that administers disability, retirement-survivor and unemployment-sickness insurance benefit programs to over 730,000 beneficiaries who live in every state and congressional district across the United States. These benefits, funded by employer and employee payroll taxes, play an important role in the lives of current and retired railroad workers and their families.

The RRB's primary need is funding for staffing. Increased staff will help the agency achieve greater efficiency, improved customer service, and program integrity. Staffed at 775 full-time equivalents (FTEs), the RRB would need a minimum of 880 FTEs to sustain all of their mission critical programs. With over a third of its staff eligible for retirement by 2022, the agency is facing a severe loss of institutional knowledge. For the RRB, staffing investments mean a well-trained, knowledgeable staff that can meet mission critical needs while the agency works to modernize its IT systems and processes.

From FY15 to FY21, the agency's enacted appropriations for the administrative budget only rose by \$3 million. Over that time period the agency also absorbed nearly \$8 million in cost-of-living adjustments making the task of maintaining a sufficient level of staffing and meeting mission critical needs nearly impossible. Another year of flat funding will mean less staff and will result in railroaders and their families facing further delays in benefit payments, longer wait times to schedule appointments to apply for benefits, increased wait times on the toll-free customer service number for assistance, and increased casework backlog. With a small increase in funding for personnel the agency can hire and train the next generation of RRB employees and provide the customer service RRB customers deserve.

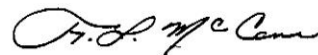
The American Rescue Plan allocated the remaining \$21 million the RRB needed to complete its modernization of its over 40-year-old IT system—which had received incremental appropriations since FY18. In the future, the RRB will have a modernized IT system with expanded automated and online service functions which will allow the agency to better and efficiently serve railroaders and their families in processing claims and benefit payments, reduce IT system maintenance costs, and protect against cybersecurity threats and risks. However, until the systems have been modernized, the RRB's work remains largely manual and without a sufficient level of staffing we expect continued significant backlogs, poor customer service, and unacceptable processing times.

We respectfully request Congress provide the RRB with \$148,371,000 in FY 2022 funding to address the agency's staffing needs and ensure it is able to efficiently sustain its mission critical operations.

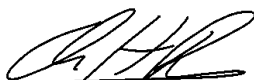
Sincerely,



Ian Jefferies
President and CEO
Association of American Railroads



F.L. McCann
Chair
Rail Labor Division



Chuck Baker
President
American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association