

GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE  
ORAL TESTIMONY  
THE TRAIN DERAILMENT IN EAST PALESTINE, OHIO  
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
DELIVERED VIA ZOOM FROM EAST PALESTINE HIGH SCHOOL  
MARCH 23, 2023

Chairwoman Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, and Members of the Committee -- Thank you for the opportunity to testify remotely from the East Palestine High School library.

The New Year started off normally in East Palestine -- a village of just over 4,700 people. They had just enjoyed Christmas and the annual Snowflake Festival in December.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of school started in late January.

Parts had been cast for the high school musical -- The Lion King Jr.

And, the Athletic Director was preparing to host 25 to 30 teams for the Bulldog Invitational Track Meet in April.

The evening of February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, started off not unlike a lot of Friday nights in East Palestine. Parents and members of the community were gathered at the high school, cheering on the varsity boys basketball team at the Bulldogs home game against the United High School Eagles from nearby Hanoverton.

The girls varsity team had played against the Eagles just the night before.

The backdrop to all things in East Palestine is the near constant rumble of trains running through the village. But, the people of East Palestine are used to this. Many don't even notice them anymore.

That was until 8:55pm that Friday night. Life stopped being normal for everyone in this community -- it stopped feeling safe -- when 38 cars of that Norfolk Southern freight train, carrying hundreds of thousands of pounds of hazardous materials, hurtled off the track.

Since then, I have visited the community a number of times and have had mothers tell me they are afraid to let their children play in the grass in their yards.

Some residents have told me about their bloody noses and rashes and coughs they have developed, while others, who don't have symptoms now, ask what is going to happen to them in 10 or 15 years?

Some want to know if it is safe to plant a garden this Spring, and if they do, will the vegetables be safe to eat?

People wonder about their property values and if they will ever be able to sell their homes?

Will their small businesses stay afloat?

Many just wonder: Will life ever return to normal?

What is clear for all of East Palestine is that this has been a deeply traumatic experience for the entire community. While all the tests of the air and the soil and the water have thus far shown repeatedly that things are safe, fear remains.

The people of East Palestine have told me they want their community back. They want things to go back to the way they were before the train wreck.

Members of the Committee, Norfolk Southern has an obligation to restore this community. This was their train, their tracks, and they are responsible for this tragedy.

I thank Senators Vance and Brown and the other co-sponsors for their bill -- the Rail Safety Act of 2023. I also thank Congressman Johnson and Congresswoman Sykes for their bill -- the Rail Act. I am grateful the drafters included my request for a provision requiring rail carriers to provide advance notification to state emergency responders about trains carrying hazardous materials, such as vinyl chloride.

I urge the Senate and House to swiftly act to improve the safety of our railroads.

Norfolk Southern must do everything in its power to put everything back as it was in East Palestine before 8:55pm, Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. The people of this village have a right to get their lives back and their community back -- and simply to get their peace of mind back.

Madam Chair, I would like to mention one other thing. Shortly after the derailment, I heard repeatedly from residents that they were concerned about their health, so we worked with the East Palestine community to create a clinic for the residents so they could be assessed immediately.

We started that clinic several weeks ago. This morning in this library, I met with medical leaders from the East Liverpool City Hospital, and we are announcing today that we will be making this into a permanent clinic for the community. It will be a full service clinic, that will provide comprehensive care and treatment. This is a long-term commitment to the health of the people of East Palestine.