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RESOLUTION NO. _____ - 2023

EXPRESSING the support of the Mayor and Cincinnati City Council for the people of East Palestine, Ohio and the need for urgency to improve safety on railroads.

WHEREAS, on Friday, February 3, 2023, a 150-car-long Norfolk Southern train that was hauling several tanker cars of hazardous gas derailed in East Palestine, Ohio resulting in a “controlled burn” of the rail cars; and

WHEREAS, the full extent of the long-term damage to environmental and human health is unclear, but chemicals have spilled into the air, surface soils, and surface waters, including the Ohio River, killing thousands of fish; and

WHEREAS, the EPA classifies vinyl chloride – the main chemical released – as a carcinogen with routine exposure increasing one’s risk of liver damage or liver cancer, and short-term exposure to high concentrations causing drowsiness, loss of coordination, disorientation, nausea, headache, or burning or tingling, many of the short-term symptoms that the families of East Palestine, Ohio have been reported to experience in the past few days; and

WHEREAS, environmental catastrophes such as this typically have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations in Black, Brown and rural communities; and

WHEREAS, the Greater Cincinnati Water Works in coordination with partner organizations, such as the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, has done exemplary work in testing water along the Ohio River upstream from Cincinnati to ensure that our region’s water supply is protected; and

WHEREAS, the cause of the derailment is not known yet and a full federal investigation will be needed in order to protect against future accidents; and

WHEREAS, rail operators and federal regulators have a responsibility to ensure that safety measures are in place for all rail corridors in our City to protect the citizens of the City of Cincinnati; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio:

Section 1. That the Mayor and this Council stand united in support for the people of East Palestine, Ohio.

Section 2. That the Mayor and this Council express their appreciation to the workers at the Greater Cincinnati Water Works for keeping our water safe.

Section 3. That the Mayor and this Council support calls for the federal government to do a comprehensive investigation of the scope of the damage caused by the disaster and root cause of the accident.

Section 4. That to prevent such a disaster in other communities including Cincinnati, the Mayor and this Council call on federal regulators to implement common sense safety measures that improve braking systems, enhance labor conditions, and increase inspections of our national rail systems.

Section 5. That Norfolk Southern ought to work with federal partners to lay out plans for improving rail safety, building trust with communities and governments across the country.

Section 6. That a copy of this resolution be spread upon the minutes of Council and that a copy be provided to Mayor Trent Conaway of East Palestine, Governor Mike DeWine, Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator JD Vance, Congressman Greg Landsman, the US Department of Transportation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency through the office of Councilmember Mark Jeffreys.

Passed: _____, 2023

Aftab Pureval, Mayor

Attest: _____
Clerk

Submitted by Councilmembers Jeffreys, Owens, Johnson, and Walsh