



*BEFORE THE SENATE INSURANCE COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 75*

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 75 (HB 75). My name is Kevin Shimp and I am the Director of Labor and Legal Affairs for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, representing over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

In our efforts to champion economic competitiveness, we support HB 75 because it contains several important reforms to our state's workers' compensation system that will help improve Ohio's business climate. The reforms included in the substitute bill seek to bring parity between two common workers' compensation benefits, prevent forum shopping, and create greater uniformity in our workers' compensation statutes.

These reforms include:

- Moving the statute of limitation for occupational diseases to one year from the date the disability due to the disease began. Moving the statute of limitation to one year for occupational diseases brings more uniformity to Ohio's workers' compensation law since the legislature has recently enacted a one year statute of limitation for injury claims and for claims alleging the violation of a specific safety regulation (VSSR).
- Requiring claimants who have previously been denied a permanent disability benefit from reapplying for the benefit unless the individual presents evidence of new and changed circumstances. Without this change, there is nothing in the law to prevent claimants from reapplying for a benefit that had been previously denied in hopes that a new hearing officer will apply the law differently than the prior hearing officer.
- Creating parity between two commonly used time-off benefits. Under current law, a claimant is barred from applying for a scheduled loss benefit known as permanent partial disability when they are receiving temporary total disability. However, this prohibition does not exist if the employee receives wage

continuation which is a substitute benefit for temporary total disability that an employee may choose to accept. Under HB 75, these two time-off benefits are treated equally, so an employee can no longer apply for a scheduled loss benefit while simultaneously receiving wage continuation.

The package of reforms in HB 75 builds upon the work of prior General Assemblies who have passed bi-partisan legislation that improves the workers' compensation system for all stakeholders.

Also included in HB 75 is funding for important initiatives of the Bureau of Workers' Compensation including \$70 million for safety grants, more than \$50 million for the division of safety and hygiene, and \$7.5 million for the substance use recovery and workplace safety program. Taken together these initiatives help injured Ohioans avoid the dangers of opioid abuse and help create safer workplaces for Ohioans which reduces the number of on the job injuries.

The Ohio Chamber urges your favorable consideration of HB 75 and I can answer any questions from the committee.