

House Insurance Committee

March 21, 2018

10:00 a.m. Room 116

Proponent testimony HB99

Thank you, Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Henne, Ranking Member Bocchieri and Members of the House Insurance Committee. My name is Larry Ward and I live in Hopedale, Ohio. I am a fifty-two year member of the United Mine Workers of America. I stand before you today to give Proponent Testimony on HB 99.

I am going to start by telling you about a friend of mine. My friend came to this country when he was two years old. He started working in a coal mine when he was fourteen. We had some good times, hunting, fishing, and we even did a little farming. He was a coach with my Little League baseball team.

After working forty-two years in the mine he had to stop working because at that time he could not walk fifty feet without stopping to try to get some air. My father died on May 30, 1974 from a heart attack and lung problems. He had spent six years trying to get his Black Lung claim approved. He was set for another hearing on June 3, 1974 in Cleveland, Ohio. In Ohio if you are not dead and have an autopsy performed you do not get Black Lung benefits. These same miners that have become disabled by Black Lung are facing an additional problem. The United States government in 1946 promised the mine workers they would receive cradle to grave health care and a pension when they retired. The average pension in Ohio is \$557.00 a month. As you can tell miners do not receive large pension checks. I know many that receive less than the \$557.00 average. We are fighting at the Federal level to make sure Congress keeps the promise made in 1946.

This Committee has a model program that would allow miners that have Black Lung to receive some benefits based on percentage of disability. I must thank Representative Cera for his work on HB 99. Representative Cera knows first hand how much these miners that have Black Lung suffer from the disease. I believe this Committee has the ability to make the life of coalminers with Black Lung a lot less stressful. I am pleased to say I was diagnosed with minimal Black Lung. I do not suffer as my father did. Please pass out of this Committee HB 99. Thank you. If you have any questions I will try to answer them.