



**Representative Lisa Sobecki  
House District 45**

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**House Bill (H.B.) 573 Testimony  
May 12, 2020**

Good morning. Chair Brinkman, Vice-Chair Antani, and Ranking Member Boggs, my joint sponsor, and members of the House Insurance Committee; thank you for opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 573 today. House Bill 573 amends the Ohio Revised Code, classifying COVID-19 as an occupational disease under the Workers Compensation law, and is the right thing to do for Ohioans and their families.

In accordance with Governor Mike DeWine's executive order, many Ohio businesses closed down to help slow the spread of COVID-19 with the exception of those deemed "essential" to fighting the virus and maintaining necessities for life such as grocery stores for example. In many cases, men and women bravely faced uncertainty and risked their health, and the health of their families to continue to work "essential" jobs. Ohioans working at grocery stores were asked to step-up during a midst of crisis where there was not adequate testing and personal protection equipment, ppe. These workers were, and still continue to be "high risk" for contracting COVID-19, and for those who have an underlying medical condition, or elderly, infection could result in death. That is why it is important that we recognize the risk these Ohioans are taking so we can have access to food. We can do that by classifying COVID-19 as an occupational disease.

House Bill 573 will allow workers who contracted COVID-19 between March 9, 2020 and fourteen days after the end of the Governor's State of Emergency declaration, to claim workers comp. Claims that arise within this time period, and when the employee is required to work outside of their house, constitutes a presumption that the worker was infected with COVID-19 while he or she was working. In addition, the bill contains an emergency clause so the section can take effect immediately.

We have a responsibility to protect Ohioans, especially hard working men and women. Workers Compensation exists to provide some level of assurance to employees who are injured on the jobsite that they will be taken care of. The men and women working during this pandemic deserve that same assurance, and they have been donning their capes and masks every day for the protection of Ohioans. We need to have their backs as they have had ours. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.