



## Kristin Boggs

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Chairman Brinkman, Vice-Chair Antani and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 571. House Bill 571 amends the Ohio Revised Code, classifying COVID-19 as an occupational disease for our first responders under the Workers Compensation law.

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 our first responders. In many cases, our first responders faced uncertainty and risked their health, and the health of their families, to continue keeping Ohioans safe—especially during times where testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) were limited. Our first responders were, and still continue to be, "high risk" for contracting COVID-19. That is why it is important that we recognize the risk our first responders are taking so we can be safe. We can do that by classifying COVID-19 as an occupational disease.

House Bill 571 will allow first responders 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 compensation. Claims that arise within this time period constitute a presumption that the first responder 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 our first responders. Workers Compensation exists to provide some level of assurance to employees who are injured or contract diseases while working that they will be taken care of. The men and women on the front lines of this pandemic deserve that same assurance, especially when they put their lives on the line every day for the protection of Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.