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February 4, 2020

Senator Bob Hackett
Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square, Rm. 132
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Hackett,

The Ohio Chamber supports substitute House Bill 81 (HB 81) which passed unanimously out of the Ohio House because it will make improvements to our already strong workers' compensation system.

In the Buckeye State, the number of workplace injuries and workers' compensation claims are steadily decreasing due to prioritization of workplace safety by employers, modern manufacturing processes, and safer equipment. Likewise, employer premiums are at their lowest level in at least forty years with premium reductions in eleven of the past twelve years.

The reforms included in substitute HB 81 will build upon the Bureau's progress by making reasonable and incremental changes to our workers' compensation laws. These reforms include:

- Amending the commencement of the continuing jurisdiction for the Bureau and Industrial Commission to the date an injured worker last received medical treatment. This change will lead to more uniformity and predictability for the system since claims will no longer be kept open for an unnecessary period of time due to medical billing practices.
- Aligning the statute of limitation for VSSR claims – workers' compensation claims that allege the violation of specific safety rule – with the statute of limitation changes made in the workers' compensation budget from the prior General Assembly. This alignment will bring more consistency to Ohio's workers' compensation law.
- Codifying the doctrine of voluntary abandonment to assure benefits are only paid when an individual's lost wage is the direct result of a workplace injury. The Ohio Chamber would prefer language regarding the intent of the General Assembly to supersede previous judicial decision on voluntary abandonment be moved to uncodified law or struck from the bill. However, we continue to support substitute HB 81 because codifying the voluntary abandonment doctrine is an important public policy priority of the Chamber.
- Modifying the procedures for final settlement agreements to assure employers who have an interest in the claim will retain their right to object to settlement agreements.

In the Ohio House, the business community worked with other interested parties and the Bureau to develop these reforms to assure the changes made will keep Ohio's workers' compensation system moving in the right direction for all stakeholders.

The Ohio Chamber urges your favorable consideration of substitute HB 81 because its passage will improve Ohio's business climate through meaningful reforms to the state's workers' compensation system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Shimp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Kevin Shimp, Esq.
Director, Labor & Legal Affairs
Ohio Chamber of Commerce