



TO: The Honorable Members of the PA Senate Labor & Industry Committee
FROM: Alex Halper, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
DATE: Oct. 1, 2024
RE: **H.B. 1632 Workers Compensation Expansion – Work Toward Compromise**

We urge lawmakers to hold off considering H.B. 1632 and continue working with stakeholders to find a compromise. The committee is scheduled to consider the bill today.

This legislation relates to workers' compensation coverage for mental healthcare. Current law has attempted to strike the right balance: focusing on mental health conditions that manifest following an injury or following an incident outside the normal scope of the position.

H.B. 1632 proposes a fundamental shift to covering mental health treatment under works comp by extending to conditions that manifest following *normal* work conditions for certain categories of public employees.

Mental health treatment under any circumstance is critically important and we understand regular health insurance for law enforcement and emergency responders covers mental healthcare. Shifting coverage to workers' comp, however, could significantly increase costs on taxpayers, a portion of which would flow to plaintiffs' attorneys instead of care for workers.

If lawmakers believe this is the right approach, we urge you to consider additional safeguards to help ensure this new benefit is protected from misuse by plaintiffs' attorneys. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania's workers' compensation history is filled with incidents of plaintiffs' attorneys taking advantage of the law and injured workers, and this new category of cases may be particularly susceptible to abuse.

Lawmakers can pursue legislation that achieves the intended goal of supporting first responders, while still protecting the law from misuse. We remain hopeful that a compromise may be reached and urge the Committee to hold off consideration and allow that work to continue.