



Workers' Injury Law & Advocacy Group®

Workers' Injury Law & Advocacy Group® is the national non-profit membership organization dedicated to representing the interests of millions of workers and their families who, each year, suffer the consequences of workplace injuries and illnesses. The group acts principally to assist attorneys and non-profit groups in advocating the rights of injured workers through education, communication, research, and information gathering. WILG® is a network of like-minded advocates for workers' rights, sharing information and knowledge, a sense of commitment and kinship, and networking to help each other and our clients.

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Ryan Mackenzie
Chairman
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ilhan Omar
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Mackenzie and Ranking Member Omar:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Workers' Injury Law and Advocacy Group ("WILG") in regards to your upcoming hearing entitled: "FECA Reform and Oversight: Prioritizing Workers, Protecting Taxpayer Dollars." WILG is a national non-profit membership organization dedicated to representing the interests of millions of workers and their families who, each year, suffer the consequences of workplace injuries and illnesses. We urge the Committee to focus on prioritizing worker health and wellbeing and not on cutting life-saving benefits.

The Federal Employees' Compensation Program (FECP) is a program managed by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) within the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Its purpose is to provide wage replacement, medical treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and other benefits to federal civilian employees who suffer job-related injuries or occupational illnesses under the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA). FECA covers almost 3 million federal employees from over 70 agencies. Federal employees serve a wide range of job functions including a number of dangerous jobs such as construction, firefighting, law enforcement and emergency services. Workers' compensation is crucial for employees because it provides vital financial and medical support in the event of a work-related injury or illness. It may also include rehabilitation services and death benefits. Cuts to benefits will result in irreparable harm to already injured workers and will just drive workers to other federal programs,

resulting in cost shifting rather than cost saving. Instead, we urge the Committee to look at options that will cut costs and prioritize workers at the same time.

Currently, injured workers waiting months— sometimes longer— just for an initial decision about their injury. Appeal hearings are being postponed indefinitely, and critical benefit determinations are languishing in administrative purgatory. The OWCP is already burdened with a heavy caseload and has been further strained by staffing cuts. Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that there are not enough doctors willing to work with the FECA program and injured workers sometimes must travel across states to see a FECA-eligible doctor.

A bi-partisan, common-sense way to bring down the costs of the FECA program and support workers at the same time is to enact the Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers' Act. The Act, which already passed the House twice, expands the definition of "qualified physician" under the FECA to include Nurse Practitioners ("NPs") and Physician Assistants ("PAs"). This change will simply allow NPs and PAs to sign their own medical reports for their federal patients so those reports can be considered evidence in support of a work-related injury claim. More importantly, it will make medical care easier and bring down healthcare costs by expanding the pool of eligible healthcare providers that can treat FECA patients, thereby allowing them to return to work more quickly.

We also urge the Committee to combat baseless accusations of fraud and abuse in the FECA system. Policy differences between federal and state workers compensation programs do not amount to fraud or abuse. Federal employees work hard— many at jobs that are responsible for protecting the American public and, as a result, are entitled to benefits if and when they get hurt. There is absolutely no data that supports fraud and abuse as a major driver of costs in the FECA program.

There are thoughtful ways that the Committee could make improvements to FECA that would be beneficial to workers while also saving money. We urge the Committee to focus on those improvements.

Respectfully,



Roger Finderson
President