



PRESS STATEMENT
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Undocumented workers remain protected in Workers' Compensation Budget

After receiving pressure from advocates and concerned citizens, today the Ohio Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee struck a measure from Ohio's Bureau of Workers' Compensation Budget bill that would have put workers and businesses at risk. Workers Compensation was established so that injured workers could get the medical treatment they need and to replace lost wages. Last month, the Ohio House passed the agency budget (House Bill 27) that included a provision barring undocumented workers from receiving that same protection. This provision would have made it virtually impossible for these workers to seek redress for their injuries, while encouraging some unscrupulous employers to hire more undocumented workers in order to avoid workers' compensation liability, and then cut corners on safety. Employers would also be exposed to risk of lawsuits they're now protected from by the system.

The committee voted on a modified bill that strikes the undocumented workers exclusion and preserves the integrity of the system. Michael Shields, a researcher at Policy Matters Ohio, submitted testimony opposing the measure to exclude undocumented workers. He commended the committee. "The undocumented workers exclusion would have put workers at risk and hamstrung businesses that play by the rules," he said. "Striking it from the budget makes sense for all workers and businesses alike."

HB 27 goes to a vote by the full Senate tomorrow. If passed - as expected - it will be up to the House to concur or insist on a Conference Committee. The Senate should pass the Bureau of Workers' Comp budget that includes all workers, and the House should concur with that version.

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