



**GENERAL
TEAMSTERS
LOCAL 959
STATE OF ALASKA**

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Rick Boyles, Secretary-Treasurer
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April 7, 2014

Honorable Kurt Olson
Chair-House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol, Rm 24

Re: CS for HB 316-Workers' Compensation Fees

Dear Chairman Olson:

On behalf of the over 7,000 Teamster members that we represent in various industries around the state including, mining, healthcare, public sector including police officers, telecommunications, railroad, oil/gas, as well as tourism, to name a few we want express our support for HB 316. Many of our employers in the various industries have and maintain some of the best Safety and Return-to-Work programs that we believe help reduce and in some cases eliminate employee injuries, thereby reducing cost of workers compensation.

The Teamsters along with our employers work hard to keep employees safe on the job, a cost we can control to some degree. So it is unfortunate when an employee is injured and medical services are required. The cost of those services can be expensive. There are many reports showing the medical cost in our state rank one of the highest in country. That being said, it should be no surprise that our workers' compensation costs are also high.

Like many employers, we have been forced over the last ten years to make changes to our Teamster Health Benefit plan in an attempt to reduce medical cost, such as negotiated PPO's, wellness incentive programs and as of last year implementing a medical tourism option. While we recognize that this is not a complete fix to the workers' compensation program, we do support the effort. We look forward to working with you and addressing the many other issues that injured workers deal with as well in the future.

We applaud your introduction of HB 316 as opportunity to address overall cost without negatively impacting the injured workers ability to receive care, nor negatively impact a doctor's ability to provide quality treatment and overall care. We look forward to working with you in the future to improve the overall issues that injured workers face in Alaska.

Sincerely,

TEAMSTERS LOCAL 959

Barbara Huff Tuckness
Director Legislative and Government Affairs