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March 7, 2017

The Honorable John Coghill
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 119
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 29

Dear Senator Coghill:

The Workers' Compensation Committee of Alaska (WCCA) is an employer advocacy group dedicated to helping educate and advocate for Alaska employers on issues regarding workers' compensation. We thank the governor for taking an interest in the workers' compensation system and introducing legislation meant to streamline the appeals process for injured workers and employers.

The WCCA has reviewed Senate Bill 29 and it is our concern that even though the legislation is well-intended to streamline the appeals process, returning to the Superior Court system for appeals will have the effect of making the workers' compensation system less efficient and less predictable. It is an area of the law with which Superior Court judges are totally unfamiliar. Workers' compensation cases are viewed as being less of a priority than other matters heard in Superior Court and will therefore receive a lower priority. Consequently, the length of time required to get through the appeals process are likely to be upwards of 18 months, significantly longer than is currently the case.

Therefore, it is the position of the WCCA that we cannot support Senate Bill 29. Instead, what should be considered is a move away from relying on a system of hearing officers and a move towards the use of administrative law judges to move disputed workers' compensation claims through the system.

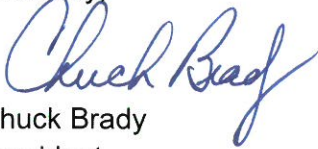
WCCA

March 7, 2017

Page 2

As always, the WCCA is available to provide input and guidance on workers' compensation issues. The WCCA believes that comprehensive workers' compensation reform is what Alaska employers need...desperately! Please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Brady". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chuck Brady
President