

SB 660; SB 665; SB 666; SB 141

Workers' Compensation Mandates

STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION

To the Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 18, 2021 Public Hearing

The National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC)¹ and its members, thank you for the opportunity to express strong opposition to legislation referenced above and urge no further action.

In recent decades, American society has made great strides in recognizing and treating mental health issues. Appropriate diagnoses, expanded access to treatments, and advances in pharmacology have benefited millions of Americans. Laudably, according to Mental Health America², Connecticut ranked among the top 15 states for access to mental health care.

Accordingly, Connecticut's current workers' compensation claims and benefits construct regarding mental or emotional impairments supports sound public health policy principles that protect workers. Appropriately, current law in Connecticut permits workplace stress-related claims to instances where the mental injury was caused by a physical injury or occupational disease.

However, the proposed bills cited above seek to expand current law in ways that would be detrimental to the states' workers' compensation system. The expansion of current remedies concerning coverage for mental or emotional impairments will generate a significant increase of claims and cause claims unrelated to work to be accepted as compensable; the result of which will cause workers' compensation costs to significantly increase and threaten the affordability of workers' compensation insurance. If mental or emotional impairments were to become compensable injuries, any pre-existing mental or emotional condition, including depression, general anxiety, social anxiety, separation anxiety, stress-related disorders, mood disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, sleep disorders, eating disorders, or substance abuse disorders aggravated by an employee's employment would be compensable. Employees who alleged such a claim would be eligible for indemnity and medical benefits throughout their life.

NAMIC cautions legislators that the unintended consequences of approving these drastic changes to the workers' compensation system will do more harm than good and are unnecessary given the current protections afforded to Connecticut workers.

¹ The National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies is the largest property/casualty insurance trade group with a diverse membership of more than 1,400 local, regional, and national member companies, including seven of the top 10 property/casualty insurers in the United States. NAMIC members lead the personal lines sector representing 66 percent of the homeowner's insurance market and 53 percent of the auto market.

² Mental Health America 2020 Ranking of the States



For these reasons, NAMIC and its member companies ask that you consider the potential adverse impact this legislation could have on the worker's compensation system in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.

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Respectfully Submitted,
Rory Whelan
Regional Vice President, Northeast
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies