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## STATE OF CONNECTICUT WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION

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### Testimony of Stephen M. Morelli Chairman, Connecticut Workers' Compensation Commission Before the Appropriations Committee February 18, 2021

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Stephen Morelli, and I am the Chairman of the Workers' Compensation Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the Commission's budget for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023.

The Workers' Compensation Commission is a quasi-judicial state agency which administers the workers' compensation laws of the State of Connecticut. The Commission strives to ensure that workers injured on the job receive prompt payment of lost income benefits and attendant medical expenses, with the ultimate goal of returning injured workers to productive jobs. There are sixteen Workers' Compensation Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by legislative approval. Commissioners use their adjudicative power to ensure injured employees' and employers' rights are fully protected, and that employees and employers fully carry out their legal responsibilities.

As Chairman, I am responsible for the administration of the Commission, in consultation with the statutorily appointed Workers' Compensation Advisory Board. I also serve as the Presiding Commissioner of the Compensation Review Board (CRB) along with two other Commissioners appointed for one-year terms. The CRB hears appeals of the formal hearing decisions of the fifteen Commissioners who function as trial commissioners in the agency's eight district offices. Additionally, the Agency oversees the approval of all employer applications seeking to be certified as self-insured pursuant to C.G.S. 31-284, and the approval and regulation of Medical Care Plans pursuant to C.G.S. 31-279.

During Fiscal Year 2020, over 50,000 injuries and illnesses were reported to the Commission. District Offices held nearly 45,000 Informal and Pre-formal Hearings, and over 400 Formal Hearings. Commissioners approved over 8,600 Voluntary Agreements, over 3,200 Stipulations and issued over 1,200 Awards. 1,438 employer sites were visited or assessed remotely by Safety Program Officers who work cooperatively with employers to devise and implement safety programs resulting in reduced accidents, injuries, medical costs, and lost workdays.

As a result of COVID-19 and to ensure the safety of agency staff and the public, the Commission began conducting all hearings telephonically on March 19, 2020. With the exception of a few in-person emergency Formal Hearings, all hearings continue to be done telephonically or through Microsoft Teams.

Governor Lamont's recommended biennial budget appropriates \$22,139,252 in fiscal year 2022 and \$22,971,846 in fiscal year 2023. This funding comes through the Workers' Compensation Administration Fund, which is administered by the State Treasurer's Office, and financed by an annual assessment of employers in Connecticut.

The budget recommends adjustments that will reflect fringe benefit rates, employee and commissioner wages, and indirect overhead at the Comptroller's projected amount. Reductions are recommended to reflect current staffing needs and updated lease costs.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and thank you again for your time.