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Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce
Senate Insurance, Commerce and Labor Committee
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Good afternoon, Chairman Buehrer and members of the Senator Insurance, Commerce and Labor Committee. My name is Chris Kershner and I am the Vice President of Public Policy & Economic Development for the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. For those of you that may not be familiar with the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce, we are the 17th largest chamber of commerce in the United States, representing 2,900 businesses in a nine county region in Southwest Ohio. Additionally, the Dayton Chamber has helped to foster a longstanding relationship between the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation and businesses throughout the Dayton area.

The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce currently has 747 employers in our group rating program with the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, we currently have 352 employers participating in the Dayton/ Miami Valley Safety Council and we currently have 179 employers enrolled in the 2+2 Safety Incentive Program through the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation. All together this represents over 1,200 businesses in just the greater Dayton region that have partnered with the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation to make workplace safety and accident claim reduction a priority for their businesses.

Because of the significant impact that the actions at the Bureau have had on the businesses in the Dayton region, we closely monitor rate adjustments, group rating adjustments, workplace safety training adjustments and any other changes that will have an impact on the Dayton area business community. I am here to testify today to the changes that the BWC has enacted and the additional unprecedented, drastic changes they are considering making to the group rating program. These changes are affecting our State of Ohio and businesses within state in two ways:

- 1) First, these changes are continually contradicting the importance and focus that should be put on workplace safety in the business community. As the BWC Group Rating Program continues to reduce the maximum discount made available to group participants and tacks on additional surcharges or taxes to group rating participants, more commonly known as the “break-even factor,” it continues to make it less valuable for businesses in Ohio to participate in a group rating program. These are the businesses that have had little to no claims with the BWC and have made workplace safety a top priority in their organizations. Additionally, the 2+2 Safety Incentive Program has provided an educational venue for employers to participate in continuing safety education programming and receive updates on workplace safety trends. When combined together, the 2+2 Safety Incentive Program and a substantial Group Rating Program provide employers with a comprehensive portfolio that makes workplace safety a priority. However, a recent change at the BWC does not allow employers to participate in the Group Rating program and the 2+2 Safety Incentive Program or the Drug Free Workplace Program. Not allowing these programs to work in concert with each other is a regressive approach that will work against claim reduction at the BWC and could ultimately hinder, employer workplace safety initiatives throughout Ohio.

2) Secondly, The State of Ohio is currently facing unprecedented economic times and a continuously looming state budget. Economic development initiatives must continue to be paramount as the state begins its road to recovery. Let it be clear, that the BWC Group Rating Program, 2+2 Safety Incentive Program and all other business incentive programs through the BWC, are economic development tools that help to make Ohio an attractive location for businesses to locate. It is important to note that the business climate in Ohio has changed and the economic development game is no longer 100% focused on business attraction, now it must be focused on business retention. As changes are made to Ohio's tax structure or the BWC's employer programs, businesses have directly expressed to us that they do take this into account when deciding what state or even country to locate their operations in. Ohio is in a position where status quo is no longer acceptable; we must be more aggressive than any other state if we hope retain our state's business community and make our state attractive to business growth. Retaining and growing the best possible maximum discount for group rating employers, without an additional surcharge, is vital tool in keeping these businesses and jobs in Ohio for years to come.

As changes are being considered to these programs at the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, I encourage you to keep the thoughts of the employer community, the economic development community and workplace safety training community in mind. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.