

TO: Honorable Members of the House Labor and Industry Committee
FROM: Alex Halper, Manager - Government Affairs
DATE: May 9, 2011
RE: HB 808 – Workers’ Compensation (WC) Medical Provider Panels

On behalf of its membership comprising thousands of businesses of all sizes and across all industry sectors, the PA Chamber of Business and Industry is writing to you to express our support of HB 808, which is scheduled to be considered by the House Labor and Industry Committee on Tuesday, May 10. This legislation extends from 90 to 180 days the period in which an employee who has filed a WC claim must seek medical treatment through an employer-designated medical provider panel.

The PA Chamber is committed to promoting safety and health in the workplace and supports the payment of benefits to employees harmed as the result of work-related injuries and illnesses. The goal for everyone should be getting the employee healthy and returned to work as soon as possible.

The Chamber supports HB 808 because receiving medical care through a provider panel is in the best interest of the employee, helps mitigate employer costs, provides the best opportunity for a quick recovery and return to the workplace, and therefore, ought to be encouraged for as long as possible. In fact, the PA Chamber would support legislation that goes even further to require injured employees to seek care through the provider panel for the entirety of their treatment.

The 2009 Workers’ Compensation Medical Access Study, commissioned by the Department of Labor and Industry includes the following findings from a survey of individuals with workers’ compensation claims:

- The best results continued to come from workers who have proper access to panel providers...They are more likely to be informed regarding rights and benefits, to report satisfaction with the care received and to return to work more quickly...
- The injured worker population whose employers do not have panels continued to report the worst results. They are likely to be the least satisfied and the slowest to return to work...injured workers left to their own devices to find providers remain out of work 42 percent longer than the workers with proper panel access...

Employees are consistently more satisfied with and receive higher quality, more effective care from provider panels. Moreover, a study by the Workers Compensation Research Institute stated that extending the period of employer control is “likely to reduce medical costs without increasing disability duration...”

Given the significant benefits of provider panels to employee and employer alike, the PA Chamber urges your support for HB 808.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 717-720-5471 or ahalper@pachamber.org.