



For Immediate Release  
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## **Workers' Compensation Commissioner Christopher Godfrey Testifies Before Congress *Discusses Failures Within the New Disability Ratings for Injured Workers***

Des Moines – Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner, Christopher Godfrey, testified before the Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Workplace Protections last week regarding potential changes in impairment ratings commonly used in workers' compensation disability claims.

Iowa convened a Workers' Compensation Task Force to review the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition AMA Guides and whether Iowa should adopt the new edition or remain with the current 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. The eight member task force recommended that Iowa not utilize the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the AMA Guide and remain with the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.

"Iowa's self-effectuating workers' compensation system relies upon disability payments that are reliable and consistent," Stated Commissioner Godfrey. "The decision of the AMA to alter the existing impairment paradigm significantly impacts both Iowa employers and injured workers. This system-altering change occurred without open discussion or transparency." "Furthermore, if there is to be a change in the level of compensate paid to injured workers, either a change up or down, that change should be made by Iowans and not an unelected group of people unwilling to identify themselves."

The 6<sup>th</sup> Edition was rejected by the Iowa Task Force as it substantially altered the framework for assigning disability impairment ratings. Additionally, there was concern with the lack of transparency involved in developing the new Guides – especially since the AMA is unwilling to share who was involved in assigning value or changing the framework. The Task Force also noted that the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition is riddled with errors, lacks peer review, and has not been tested to avoid disparate treatment due to race/culture/educational standards.

In addition to the concern about the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition the House was investigating the practice of states cutting workers' compensation monetary and medical benefits to attract or retain business within the state and the resulting financial impact on the federal Medicare and Social Security Disability systems. In general, when workers' benefits are cut under state workers' compensation systems they most frequently turn to the federal system to obtain medical or disability assistance. In essence, the federal government is concerned that states are limiting legitimate insurance company/employer liability and shifting the cost to the already burdened federal government.

*Copies of Workers' Compensation Commissioner Godfrey's written statement to Congress are available from the Communications Office.*

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