



The Voice of Merit Construction

March 5, 2024

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To: Senate Finance Committee
From: Associated Builders & Contractors
RE: SB 843 - Workers' Compensation - Benefits - Hearing Loss
Position: Unfavorable

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) represent more than 1500 construction and construction-related companies through its four Maryland chapters. Our members believe in the tenets of free enterprise, investing in their workforce and giving back to the communities in which they live, work and play.

Senate Bill 843 would alter the method used to determine the percentage of hearing loss deafness for purposes of workers' compensation. Additionally, the bill would alter the method used to determine the deduction required to be made to allow for the average amount of hearing loss from nonoccupational causes in the population for purposes of requiring tinnitus to be considered part of a covered employee's hearing loss.

ABC opposes SB 843; we are concerned about the proposed adjustment to deduct for the average amount of hearing loss from nonoccupational causes in the population. While we acknowledge the importance of ensuring that workers' compensation benefits accurately reflect occupational-related injuries, we believe that such adjustments should be based on sound statistical evidence and robust research. Without adequate data to support these adjustments, there is a risk of unfairly penalizing employers for hearing loss that may have occurred outside of the workplace, leading to increased costs and administrative burdens.

Lastly, mandating that tinnitus be considered as part of a covered employee's hearing loss could have significant implications for both employers and employees. Tinnitus is a common condition that can have multiple causes, including non-work-related factors such as age and genetic predisposition. By including tinnitus in the calculation of workers' compensation benefits, employers may face additional financial liabilities for claims that are not directly attributable to workplace conditions. This could result in higher insurance premiums and increased costs of doing business, ultimately impacting job creation and economic growth.

ABC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **unfavorable** report on Senate Bill 843.

*Martin "MJ" Kraska
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