



**State Representative
Jack Cera**

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Cera seeks to improve health of Ohio coal miners with Black Lung Disease
Lawmaker says Ohio miners with crippling disease rarely receive fair compensation

COLUMBUS— State Rep. Jack Cera (D-Bellaire) today offered testimony in front of the House Insurance Committee Members on House Bill (HB) 99, legislation to create an alternative procedure for filing workers' compensation claims for coal miners with black lung disease to better ensure those affected receive fair and necessary benefits.

"I am disappointed that Republican leadership has not stepped up to better support the health and well-being of our coal miners," said Cera. "This bill sets up procedures to give Ohio coal miners with black lung disease an opportunity to receive temporary benefits while awaiting confirmation for federal benefits."

Black lung disease, also known as pneumoconiosis, is a respiratory disease caused by inhaling coal dust and severely impairs lung function over time. According to federal experts, rates of black lung disease are the highest they've been in [40 years](#) among Appalachian coal miners.

Several years ago, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) visited the Eastern Ohio Regional Hospital's Black Lung Clinic mobile examination unit in Belmont County to study local miners, young and old, as part of the Enhanced Coal Workers Health Surveillance Program. During the visit, Cera learned that miners living in Ohio but working in West Virginia were eligible to receive temporary compensation for Black Lung Disease, while miners living and working in Ohio rarely received such benefits.

"Both groups were able to apply for federal benefits, however, the filing process is quite lengthy. In fact, many coal miners that have experienced this say they must die, have an autopsy and hope that their spouses receive benefits after they are gone," said Cera. "I believe this is unacceptable. The need to assist these proud, hard-working individuals is very real. HB 99 is an important first step to help miners and their families get the benefits they earned and deserve."

HB 99 would create a worker's compensation process for those with black lung similar to the one in West Virginia, which allows partial disability for miner's afflicted with black lung disease. Cera's legislation would provide for the determination of Permanent Partial Disability (PPD), Temporary Total Disability (TTD) and Permanent Total Disability (PTD) for miners whose claims are approved. The number of weeks and amount of the benefit varies depending on which category a miner is determined eligible.

Additionally, HB 99 would also create a new Occupational Pneumoconiosis Board, tasked with determining all medical questions relating to workers' compensation claims for compensation and benefits for occupational pneumoconiosis. The board will consist of five certified internists or pulmonary physicians and, after completing each investigation of an occupational pneumoconiosis claim, will issue to the employer in question a written report on its determination of every medical question in controversy.

Cera, a strong advocate for coal miners and their families, has introduced numerous pieces of legislation to help improve the lives of coal miners and preserve Ohio's coal industry since the start of the 132nd General Assembly. His proposals include legislation to: encourage Congress to enact the Miners Protection Act, provide dollars to preserve abandoned

mined lands and offer jobs to laid off miners and encourage expanding a federal tax credit for carbon capture, utilization and storage.