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North Carolina Industrial Commission

February 7, 2017

Creation of the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Opioid Task Force

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Raleigh, N.C. – Chairman Charlton L. Allen of the North Carolina Industrial Commission is pleased to announce the creation of a Workers' Compensation Opioid Task Force that will study and recommend solutions for the problems arising from the intersection of the opioid epidemic and related issues in workers' compensation claims. "Opioid misuse and addiction are a major public health crisis in this state," said Chairman Allen. "Many injured workers are prescribed opioid medications as part of treatment for their injuries, creating a nexus between the problems affecting the general population and the workers' compensation system."

In Session Law 2015-241, the General Assembly tasked the Industrial Commission with studying the potential implementation of a drug formulary in workers' compensation claims filed by State employees. The Commission invested significant time and resources in the study and report, which was delivered to the General Assembly on April 1, 2016. The Commission's report focused in part on the troubling issues of opioid misuse and addiction originating from or exacerbated by workplace injuries.

"It is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that injured workers receive reasonable and necessary care for their injuries. As part of that responsibility, it is important for the Commission to understand how the opioid crisis interacts with workers' compensation claims. The Commission is committed to working with stakeholders to identify best practices in pain management and meaningful solutions to help address this crisis where possible," stated Chairman Allen.

The Workers' Compensation Opioid Task Force will be composed of representatives of various stakeholders in the workers' compensation system, each of whom will contribute a unique perspective. Anyone interested in participating on the task force should contact Kendall Bourdon at kendall.bourdon@ic.nc.gov by Wednesday, February 15, 2017.