

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 15, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We are writing to respectfully urge you to include an extension of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) COVID-19 presumption language as the Committee finalizes its Fiscal Year 2023 Labor, Health, Human Services, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. As you know, the expiration of this critical language on January 27, 2023, will significantly hinder the ability of United States Postal Service (USPS) employees who have contracted COVID-19 on the job to receive federal workers compensation benefits.

With continuing COVID-19 cases nationwide and at great risk to their own health and safety, our more than 650,000 postal clerks, mail handlers, letter carriers, and other postal workers remain on the frontlines processing and delivering essential correspondence, supplies, and services to the American people. Following 2022 midterm elections that included the delivery of tens of millions of mail-in ballots nationwide, America's postal workforce is now carrying out its critical public service mission in the midst of a peak holiday season that is already witnessing a marked surge in mail volume.

In recognition of this frontline service, Congress included language in the *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA) to facilitate the ability of postal and other federal workers diagnosed with COVID-19 to receive coverage under the *Federal Employees' Compensation Act* (FECA). Specifically, the law established a presumption of FECA coverage for federal employees that received a positive COVID-19 diagnosis and recently carried out job duties requiring contact with members of the public, co-workers, or patients. Prior to the enactment of ARPA in March of 2021, existing law required postal and other federal workers to submit proof that they contracted COVID-19 on the job and could not have otherwise contracted the illness in the course of their daily personal lives. This immense and inequitable burden of proof resulted in invasive questioning and the denial of nearly half of all workers' compensation claims. In stark contrast, implementation of the OWCP COVID-19 presumption language has decreased denial rates for USPS employees to less than three percent. Regrettably, this critical provision is scheduled to expire on January 27, 2023.

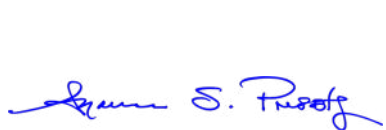
COVID-19 remains a fact of life for every postal employee—all of whom work in support of the USPS public service mission to deliver mail to every home and business in America six and even seven days a week. This past summer alone, nearly 8,000 OWCP COVID-

19 claims were filed across United States Postal Service facilities nationwide. The heightened exposure that postal workers face across their routes and facilities compounds a variety of stressors they already endure, particularly as the agency struggles with staffing shortages during one of its busiest times of the year.

We would also underscore that the Postal Service is one of the largest employers of veterans—with more than 100,000 employees having served in the military. The agency also retains a highly diverse workforce comprised of nearly 40 percent of Black and brown postal workers—many representing vulnerable communities whose health disparities across COVID-19 cases, treatments, and deaths have been well-documented. As Congress continues to undertake efforts to advance health equity, it is imperative that postal employees receive nothing short of the robust support they deserve when recovering from illness.

We urge you to extend the OWCP COVID-19 presumption language. This critical protection provides America’s postal workers with the resources they need to safeguard their own health and safety and ensure the continuation of timely, reliable, and efficient mail services for the American people.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

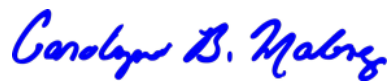


Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



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Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress



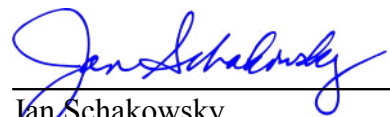
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Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress