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STATE BOARD OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION

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May 22, 2020

Dear Friends of the Georgia Workers' Compensation System:

After much reflection, consideration and deliberation, the State Board of Workers' Compensation has made the difficult decision to cancel its Annual Educational Conference due to concerns surrounding the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The conference was scheduled for August 24-26, 2020, at the Avalon Hotel in Alpharetta, Georgia.

Protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all the participants in the conference, including staff, attendees, exhibitors, sponsors, and speakers, is our paramount concern and serves as the primary rationale for not moving forward with the conference this year. Cancellation of the conference for the first time in more than 30 years appears to be the best decision in the midst of so much uncertainty about economic conditions and the health and safety restrictions that may still be in effect at the end of the summer. Put simply, we feel that cancellation of the Annual Educational Conference is the right thing to do during this unprecedented time.

Our SBWC team has been meeting daily, actively monitoring developments regarding the pandemic and following guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and the Office of Governor Brian Kemp. Due to strict social distancing requirements and shelter in place orders designed to limit exposure to the coronavirus, many Georgia businesses have had to significantly restrict their operations or close entirely during the past two months. Even as some businesses slowly reopen, we recognize that the financial consequences for these businesses may not be over by August of this year and attending the Board's Annual Educational Conference may not be a feasible budgetary option at that time. Additionally, due to the economic downturn, many employers have restricted employee travel, preventing many of the attendees and speakers from being able to attend the Board's conference and making it more difficult for the Board to provide the quality networking opportunity and educational program you have come to expect at the conference.

We understand that the cancellation of the Board's Annual Conference impacts many of you and your continuing education needs. We did not make the decision to cancel the conference without soliciting feedback from those of you who have previously participated in the conference. The results of our survey of last year's attendees, exhibitors, speakers, and sponsors showed that almost 2/3 of respondents were either undecided or not planning to attend the conference in August.

We accept our responsibility to provide a safe conference environment with full adherence to social distancing and other health guidelines that may be in effect at the end of the summer. Unfortunately, we do not believe we can guarantee the safety of all conference participants with so many prevailing unknown contingencies. Due to hotel scheduling requirements and the logistics of planning a large conference, postponing the conference to a date later in this calendar year is not a viable alternative.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the 2020 Annual Conference Steering Committee that has been working diligently over the past several months to plan and organize this year's program and events. On behalf of the Board, I want to express appreciation to all the committee members for their dedication and leadership during this difficult time.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and commitment to the Workers' Compensation system and to the Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation. We look forward to seeing you all next year at the 2021 Annual Educational Conference scheduled for August 30 through September 1, 2021, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Atlanta.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Annual Conference, please contact Conference Manager Hilary Williams at williamsh@sbwc.ga.gov.

Sincerely,

Delece Brooks

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