

SENATE No. 1011

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

James B. Eldridge

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act increasing injured workers' access to medical care and workers' compensation benefits.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

James B. Eldridge

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Middlesex and Worcester

SENATE No. 1011

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1011) of James B. Eldridge for legislation to increase injured workers’ access to medical care and workers’ compensation benefits. Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court
(2017-2018)**

An Act increasing injured workers’ access to medical care and workers’ compensation benefits.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 6 of chapter 23E of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 72, the word “or”.

3 SECTION 2. Section 6 of said chapter 23E, as so appearing, is hereby further amended
4 by inserting after the words “fifty-two”, in line 73, the following words:-

5 , or a denial based solely on a dispute over whether the individual is an employee under
6 section 1(4) of chapter 152 of the general laws, or a dispute limited to the determination of the
7 employee’s average weekly wages under section 1(1) of said chapter 152.

8 SECTION 3. Section 1 of chapter 152, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting
9 after the word “wages” in line 22, the following words:-

10 In determining the employee’s average weekly wages, all available evidence of the
11 employee’s paid wages and hours worked shall be considered, including wages earned and

12 required to be paid even if not actually received by the employee. Where the injured employee
13 received less than the wages required to be paid under chapter 149, chapter 151, or any other
14 local, state, or federal law, the employee's average weekly wages shall be calculated as if the
15 employee had earned wages in compliance with the law.

16 SECTION 4. Section 7 of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by inserting after the word
17 "case", in line 17, the following words:-

18 In determining whether to commence payment of weekly benefits, the insurer, including
19 in cases where the insurer is the Trust Fund or the Commonwealth, shall consider all information
20 and evidence provided by both the employer and the employee. The insurer shall not refuse to
21 commence payment of weekly benefits on grounds that the employer has failed to respond, to
22 provide certain information, or otherwise to participate. Where the employer has failed to
23 respond, to provide information, or otherwise to participate, the insurer shall make its
24 determination based on information provided by and available to the employee including but not
25 limited to time records, deposit slips, affidavits, or other credible substantiation of payment for
26 work; provided, however, that the insurer does not waive any defenses if it commences payment
27 on this basis.

28 SECTION 5. Said chapter 152 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended
29 by inserting after section 11D, the following section:-

30 Section 11E. Interpretation.

31 Where the injured employee's primary language is not English, the department shall
32 provide a qualified interpreter for a conciliation held under section 10 of chapter 152, a

33 conference held under section 10A of chapter 152, a hearing held under section 11 of chapter
34 152, or an impartial medical exam held under section 11A of chapter 152.

35 SECTION 6. Section 15A of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by inserting after the
36 word “insurers”, in line 2, the following words:-

37 including the Trust Fund,

38 SECTION 7. Said section 15A of said chapter 152 is hereby further amended by striking
39 out, in lines 6 to 7, the words “as may be selected by a single member of the board” and inserting
40 in place thereof the following words:-

41 , in the absence of a mutual agreement, the Trust Fund,

42 SECTION 8. Said section 15A of said chapter 152 is hereby further amended by striking
43 out, in lines 12 to 13, the words “selected by the single member as aforesaid” and inserting in
44 place thereof the following words:-

45 the Trust Fund

46 SECTION 9. Section 22 of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by striking out, in lines
47 10 to 12, the words “may be given in the manner therein provided or in such other manner as
48 may be approved by the department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

49 shall be given to employees by providing a printed copy of the notice as approved and
50 issued by the department and by posting a copy of the notice in a visible location utilized by and
51 accessible to all employees of the insured person. The notice shall include information on
52 unlawful employer retaliation, discrimination, and fraud under chapter 152 and shall be prepared
53 in English and in all other languages required under subsection (d)(iii) of section 62A of chapter

54 151A. The notice shall be provided to the employer by the department and shall be posted in
55 English and in all other primary or preferred languages of current employees and in a
56 conspicuous place in each location where an employee works. At the outset of the policy period
57 and whenever any of the information provided on the notice changes, the insurer shall provide to
58 each insured person

59 (a) a printed copy of the notice in all languages in which the notice is produced by the
60 department;

61 (b) a link to the page of the department's website where the notice as approved by the
62 department is posted; and

63 (c) a summary in writing of the insured person's obligations to provide a printed copy
64 and to post the notice as provided in this section.

65 SECTION 10. Section 30 of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by striking out, in line
66 3, the following words:-

67 together with the expenses necessarily incidental to such services,

68 SECTION 11. Said section 30 of said chapter 152 is hereby further amended by inserting
69 after the word "hospitalized", in line 5, the following words:-

70 The insurer further shall furnish the services necessarily incidental to the adequate and
71 reasonable health care services provided to an injured employee, including but not limited to
72 interpretation, transportation, and other services necessary to allow the injured employee to
73 obtain effective and timely health care services. The insurer, including in cases where the
74 insurer is the Trust Fund or the Commonwealth, shall arrange and pay directly for these

75 necessarily incidental services upon the request of the injured employee or the health care
76 provider, and otherwise shall reimburse expenses for these services. Transportation services
77 shall include door-to-door regulated taxi or comparable transportation services where the injured
78 employee cannot readily obtain private or public transportation.

79 SECTION 12. Section 34 of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by striking out, in line
80 7, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

81 the employee’s

82 SECTION 13. Section 65 of said chapter 152 is hereby amended by striking out, in line
83 21, the word “and”.

84 SECTION 14. Said section 65 of said chapter 152 is hereby further amended by inserting
85 after the words “thirty-seven A”, in line 22, the following words:-

86 ; and (h) payment of compensation under section 15A; provided, however, that the Trust
87 Fund shall recover such payment from any other insurer eventually determined to be liable to
88 pay the compensation

89 SECTION 15. Said section 65 of said chapter 152 is hereby further amended by inserting
90 after the word “provided”, in line 26, the following words:-

91 The Trust Fund shall make payment of weekly benefits and adequate and reasonable
92 health care services within 14 days of an initial written claim for weekly benefits on a form
93 prescribed by the department in cases where the dispute or disputes are limited to: (i) a question
94 of which of multiple insurers, including the Trust Fund, are liable; or (ii) a question of whether
95 the employer is insured; provided, however, that the Trust Fund shall recover such payment from

96 any other insurer eventually determined to be liable for such payments or may recover payment
97 from the employee if such benefits and services eventually are denied.