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May 13, 2020

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

On behalf of the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, and its 17 International Union affiliates comprised of tens of thousands of shipbuilders and industrial workers employed in private and government shipyards and industrial plants throughout the country, I am writing to commend and strongly support legislation originating from the House Education and Labor Committee that enacts provisions assigning automatic presumptions of illness and disability for all workers covered by the Longshore and Harbor Workers Compensation Act (LHWCA) or the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) diagnosed with COVID-19 and contained within the anticipated "HEROES Act" pandemic relief bill.

This legislation is groundbreaking for metal trades workers, shipbuilders, refinery workers and others who risk their lives by working during the COVID-19 crisis. Metal Trades workers employed throughout our Navy and private sector shipyards are an essential service, which exempts them from any "shelter in place" mandates. Therefore, metal trades workers must report to work during the pandemic and are at high risk of developing COVID-19 due to exposure on the job.

This sensible legislation establishes a non-rebuttable presumption that title 5 federal employee metal trades shipbuilders and private sector workers with a COVID-19 diagnosis are eligible for benefits covered under the LHWCA or FECA, including disability benefits, medical benefits and death benefits should any worker pass away from COVID-19. Just as important is the fact that our private sector employers will be held harmless under the legislation (their premiums cannot be raised and their rating will not be adversely affected due to reporting COVID-19 cases.) and that all federal and local OSHA COVID-19 related health standards are codified to prevent the spread of the virus. A safer workplace is vital to the wellbeing of our members and we appreciate your focus on safety.

We urge all members of Congress to strongly support the House Education and Labor Committee's COVID-19 workers compensation presumption provisions as contained in the "Heroes Act".

Sincerely,

James Hart
President