\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1837**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Bronoske, Ortiz-Self, Berry, and Pollet

AN ACT Relating to restoring the state's ability to address work-related musculoskeletal injuries; amending RCW 49.17.370; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that musculoskeletal injuries are a leading cause of disability, accounting for more than 130,000,000 patient visits to health care providers annually. These injuries cover a range of conditions related to overexertion and repetitive motion, such as pinched nerves, sprains, hernias, and connective tissue diseases. Musculoskeletal conditions are the number one reason for visits to a physician, affecting nearly half of all Americans above 18 years of age.

(2) The legislature finds that work-related musculoskeletal injuries account for at least one-third of all nonfatal work injuries, are more severe than the average nonfatal injury or illness, and are the most frequently reported cause of lost or restricted work time. Work-related musculoskeletal injuries occur from ergonomically incorrect and unregulated working practices.

(3) The legislature finds that many of Washington state's critical industries, including agriculture and health care, are described by the federal bureau of labor statistics as high-risk industries for musculoskeletal injuries. These are also industries that are currently experiencing significant staffing shortages. Further, these injuries lead to high employer costs including absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased costs for health care, disability, and workers' compensation, among other costs.

(4) Initiative Measure No. 841, approved by the voters in 2003, repealed existing ergonomic regulations and barred the department of labor and industries from regulating working practices to address musculoskeletal injuries. The legislature finds that the absence of regulatorily authority in this important area has contributed to increases in workplace injuries and costs.

(5) The legislature therefore intends to repeal the prohibition on regulating working practices related to musculoskeletal injuries, thereby allowing targeted safety efforts to more effectively and efficiently prevent these needless workplace injuries. By removing this outdated barrier, the legislature will restore the state's ability to more comprehensively address important workplace safety issues.

(6) Washington has one of the most robust, no-cost, professional safety and health consultation services available anywhere in the nation to assist employers to fulfill their responsibilities to provide a safe and healthful workplace. The legislature recognizes small businesses may be in greatest need of this expertise. Therefore, the legislature further intends that the department of labor and industries provides educational and technical support to small businesses related to ergonomic hazards and includes compliance assistance as part of the adoption of any ergonomic regulations. These efforts should be coordinated with business associations, including those representing small businesses.

**Sec.**  RCW 49.17.370 and 2004 c 1 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

For the purposes of this section, "state ergonomics regulations" are defined as the rules addressing musculoskeletal disorders, adopted on May 26, 2000, by the director of the department of labor and industries, and codified as WAC 296-62-05101 through 296-62-05176. The state ergonomics regulations, filed on May 26, 2000, by the director and codified as WAC 296-62-05101 through 296-62-05176 are repealed. ((~~The~~)) For employee home offices, the director shall not have the authority to adopt any new or amended rules dealing with musculoskeletal disorders, or that deal with the same or similar activities as these rules being repealed, until and to the extent comparable rules applying to employee home offices are required by congress or the federal occupational safety and health administration.

**--- END ---**