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**SENATE BILL 5454**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Cleveland, Robinson, King, Keiser, Van De Wege, Conway, Kuderer, Liias, Nguyen, Shewmake, Stanford, and Valdez

AN ACT Relating to industrial insurance coverage for posttraumatic stress disorders affecting registered nurses; amending RCW 51.08.142; adding a new section to chapter 51.32 RCW; and providing an effective date.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 51.08.142 and 2020 c 234 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as provided in ((~~subsection~~)) subsections (2) and (3) of this section, the department shall adopt a rule pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW that claims based on mental conditions or mental disabilities caused by stress do not fall within the definition of occupational disease in RCW 51.08.140.

(2)(a) Except as provided in (b) and (c) of this subsection, the rule adopted under subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to occupational disease claims resulting from posttraumatic stress disorders of firefighters as defined in RCW 41.26.030(17) (a), (b), (c), and (h) and firefighters, including supervisors, employed on a full-time, fully compensated basis as a firefighter of a private sector employer's fire department that includes over fifty such firefighters, and law enforcement officers as defined in RCW 41.26.030(19) (b), (c), and (e), and public safety telecommunicators who receive calls for assistance and dispatch emergency services.

(b) For firefighters as defined in RCW 41.26.030(17) (a), (b), (c), and (h) and firefighters, including supervisors, employed on a full-time, fully compensated basis as a firefighter of a private sector employer's fire department that includes over fifty such firefighters, and law enforcement officers as defined in RCW 41.26.030(19) (b), (c), and (e) hired after June 7, 2018, and public safety telecommunicators hired after June 11, 2020, (a) of this subsection only applies if the firefighter or law enforcement officer or public safety telecommunicators, as a condition of employment, has submitted to a psychological examination administered by a psychiatrist licensed in the state of Washington under chapter 18.71 RCW or a psychologist licensed in the state of Washington under chapter 18.83 RCW that ruled out the presence of posttraumatic stress disorder from preemployment exposures. If the employer does not provide the psychological examination, (a) of this subsection applies.

(c) Posttraumatic stress disorder for purposes of ((~~this subsection~~)) subsections (2) and (3) of this section is not considered an occupational disease if the disorder is directly attributed to disciplinary action, work evaluation, job transfer, layoff, demotion, termination, or similar action taken in good faith by an employer.

(d) "Public safety telecommunicators" means individuals who receive and respond to telephone or other electronic requests for emergency assistance, such as law enforcement, fire, and medical services, and dispatch appropriate emergency responders.

(3)(a) Except as provided in this subsection, the rule adopted under subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to occupational disease claims resulting from posttraumatic stress disorders of direct care registered nurses as defined in section 2 of this act.

(b) The limitation in subsection (2)(c) of this section also applies to this subsection (3).

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 51.32 RCW to read as follows:

(1) In the case of direct care registered nurses covered under this title who are employed on a fully compensated basis, there exists a prima facie presumption that posttraumatic stress disorder is an occupational disease under RCW 51.08.140.

(2) The presumption may be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence.

(3) The presumption extends to a claimant following termination of employment for a period of three calendar months for each year the claimant was a direct care registered nurse employed on a fully compensated basis, but may not extend more than 60 months following the last date of employment.

(4)(a) When a determination involving the presumption established under this section is appealed to the board of industrial insurance appeals and the final decision allows the claim for benefits, the board of industrial insurance appeals shall order that all reasonable costs of the appeal, including attorneys' fees and witness fees, be paid to the claimant or his or her beneficiary by the opposing party.

(b) When determination involving the presumption established under this section is appealed to any court and the final decision allows the claim for benefits, the court shall order that all reasonable costs of the appeal, including attorneys' fees and witness fees, be paid to the claimant or his or her beneficiary by the opposing party.

(c) When reasonable costs of the appeal must be paid by the department under this section in a state fund case, the costs shall be paid from the accident fund and charged to the costs of the claim.

(5) For purposes of this section, "direct care registered nurse" means an individual licensed as a nurse under chapter 18.79 RCW who provides direct care to patients.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act takes effect January 1, 2024.

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