

Amendment - 1st Reading-white - Requested by: Anthony Nicastro - (S) Business, Labor and Economic Affairs

- 2025

69th Legislature 2025

Drafter: Matthew Weaver,

HB0197.001.001

HOUSE BILL NO. 197

INTRODUCED BY A. NICAstro

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAWS RELATING TO TOTAL DISABILITY BENEFITS; PROVIDING GUIDELINES IN WHICH TEMPORARY TOTAL DISABILITY BENEFITS ARE TERMINATED WHEN A CLAIMANT IS RELEASED TO FULL DUTY PRIOR TO OR ON REACHING MAXIMUM MEDICAL IMPROVEMENT; PROVIDING THAT THE BENEFITS ~~ARE~~ MAY BE TERMINATED ~~ON~~ AS OF THE DATE THAT A WORKER ~~HAS BEEN RELEASED~~ RETURNED TO FULL DUTY; AMENDING SECTION 39-71-609, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN ~~IMMEDIATE~~ EFFECTIVE DATE."

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

Section 1. Section 39-71-609, MCA, is amended to read:

"39-71-609. Denial of claim after payments made or termination of all benefits or reduction to partial benefits by insurer -- 14-day notice required -- criteria for conversion of benefits -- claimant released to full duty. (1) Except as provided in ~~subsection~~ subsections (2) and (3), if an insurer determines to deny a claim on which payments have been made under 39-71-608 during a time of further investigation or, after a claim has been accepted, terminates all biweekly compensation benefits, it may do so only after 14 days' written notice to the claimant, the claimant's authorized representative, if any, and the department. For injuries occurring prior to July 1, 1987, an insurer shall give 14 days' written notice to the claimant before reducing benefits from total to partial. However, if an insurer has knowledge that a claimant has returned to work, compensation benefits may be terminated as of the time the claimant returned to work.

(2) Temporary total disability benefits may be terminated on the date that the worker has been released to return to work in some capacity. Unless the claimant is found, at maximum healing, to be without a permanent physical impairment from the injury, the insurer, prior to converting temporary total disability benefits or temporary partial disability benefits to permanent partial disability benefits:

(a) must have a physician's determination that the claimant has reached medical stability;

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(b) must have a physician's determination of the claimant's physical restrictions resulting from the industrial injury;

(c) must have a physician's determination, based on the physician's knowledge of the claimant's job analysis prepared by a rehabilitation provider, that the claimant can return to work, with or without restrictions, on the job on which the claimant was injured or on another job for which the claimant is suited by age, education, work experience, and physical condition;

(d) shall give notice to the claimant of the insurer's receipt of the report of the physician's determinations required pursuant to subsections (2)(a) through (2)(c). The notice must be attached to a copy of the report.

(3) Notwithstanding subsections (1) and (2), when a claimant is released to full duty prior to or on reaching maximum medical improvement, temporary total disability benefits ~~are may be terminated on the date that the claimant has been released to full duty as of the time the claimant returned to work or after 14 days' written notice, whichever is earlier.~~"

NEW SECTION. Section 2. Effective date. [This act] is effective ~~on passage and approval~~ July 1, 2025.

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