TO: The Honorable Members of the House Labor and Industry Committee

FROM: Alex Halper, Director, Government Affairs

DATE: Sept. 24, 2018

RE: Multiple Bills on Committee Schedule

I write on behalf of the PA Chamber regarding multiple bills the Committee is scheduled to consider today.

H.B. 297 (Dush): Amends the Prevailing Wage Act to clarify that exempt “maintenance work” includes roadwork performed on dirt, gravel and low-volume road projects. The PA Chamber supports reforms to prevailing wage that make application of the law more consistent with its original intent and will help municipalities and the Commonwealth invest taxpayer dollars more efficiently.

H.B. 861 (Grove): Codifies that public policy related to employment and the workplace be set at the state level. Pennsylvania’s labyrinth of local governments is not conducive to municipalities pursuing employment and labor laws as employers could be forced to comply with a patchwork of mandates that are inconsistent with state law and each other. Our skepticism was exacerbated in recent years as both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh passed mandatory leave ordinances that, among other shortcomings, included special exemptions for organized labor to create an unequal playing field. (Incidentally, Pittsburgh’s ordinance is on appeal before the state Supreme Court after lower courts struck it down.) H.B. 861 is also important for Pennsylvania’s competitiveness as numerous states, including Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin, have passed similar preemption bills.

H.B. 1781 (F. Keller): Helps workers and employers avoid confusion or misunderstandings related to the worker’s status as either an independent contractor or an employee, as it relates to eligibility for workers’ compensation benefits. Too often, misunderstandings are brought to light after an injury has occurred. While disagreements and confusion will never be completely eliminated, H.B. 1781 at least provides a process for both parties to jointly confirm the employment status of the individual, who deserves to know if he or she is eligible for workers’ compensation before the unfortunate event of a workplace injury.

H.B. 2571 (Klunk): Brings Pennsylvania into compliance with federal law following the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent Janus decision, which prohibits public sector unions from forcing non-union members to pay fees to the union. H.B. 2571 repeals Pennsylvania law that authorized these unconstitutional fees and ensures that public employees and job applicants are aware of their rights.

H.B. 2593 (F. Keller): Extends from 15 to 45 days the window in which public sector union members may opt to leave the union and provides that union members be made aware of their rights under this Act.
We urge support for these bills. Please contact Alex Halper at ahalper@pachamber.org or 717-720-5471 with any questions or to discuss.