HOUSE BILL No. 2007

By Representative Ward

AN ACT concerning workers compensation; relating to occupational diseases; COVID-19; amending K.S.A. 2019 Supp. 44-5a01 and repealing the existing section.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. K.S.A. 2019 Supp. 44-5a01 is hereby amended to read as follows: 44-5a01. (a) Where the employer and employee or workman are subject by law or election to the provisions of the workmen's compensation act, the disablement or death of an employee or workman resulting from an occupational disease as defined in this section shall be treated as the happening of an injury by accident, and the employee or workman or, in case of death, his dependents shall be entitled to compensation for such disablement or death resulting from an occupational disease, in accordance with the provisions of the workmen's compensation act as in cases of injuries by accident which are compensable thereunder, except as specifically provided otherwise for occupational diseases, including as provided for the occupational disease of COVID-19 pursuant to subsection (g). In no circumstances shall an occupational disease be construed to include injuries caused by repetitive trauma as defined in K.S.A. 44-508, and amendments thereto.

(b) "Occupational disease" shall mean means, except as provided by subsection (g), only a disease arising out of and in the course of the employment resulting from the nature of the employment in which the employee was engaged under such employer, and which that was actually contracted while so engaged. "Nature of the employment" shall mean means, for purposes of this section, that to the occupation, trade or employment in which the employee was engaged, there is attached a particular and peculiar hazard of such disease which that distinguishes the employment from other occupations and employment; and which that creates a hazard of such disease which that is in excess of the hazard of such disease in general. Except as provided by subsection (g), the disease must appear to have had its origin in a special risk of such disease connected with the particular type of employment and to have resulted from that source as a reasonable consequence of the risk. Ordinary diseases of life and conditions to which that the general public is or may be exposed to outside of the particular employment, and hazards of
diseases and conditions attending employment in general, shall not be
compensable as occupational diseases, except that compensation shall not
be payable for pulmonary emphysema or other types of emphysema unless
it is proved, by clear and convincing medical evidence to a reasonable
probability, that such emphysema was caused, solely and independently of
all other causes, by the employment with the employer against whom the
claim is made, except that, if it is proved to a reasonable medical
probability that an existing emphysema was aggravated and contributed to
by the employment with the employer against whom the claim is made,
compensation shall be payable for the resulting condition of the workman,
but only to the extent such condition was so contributed to and aggravated
by the employment.

(c) In no case shall an employer be liable for compensation under this
section unless disablement results within one year or death results within
three years in case of silicosis, or one year in case of any other
occupational disease, after the last injurious exposure to the hazard of such
disease in such employment, or, in case of death, unless death follows
continuous disability from such disease, commencing within the period
above limited, for which compensation has been paid or awarded or timely
claim made as provided in the workmen's compensation act, and results
within seven years after such last exposure. Where payments have been
made on account of any disablement from which death shall thereafter
result such payments shall be deducted from the amount of liability
provided by law in case of death. The time limit prescribed by this section
shall not apply in the case of an employee whose disablement or death is
due to occupational exposure to ionizing radiation.

(d) Where an occupational disease is aggravated by any disease or
infirmity, not itself compensable, or where disability or death from any
other cause, not itself compensable, is aggravated, prolonged, accelerated
or in any wise contributed to by an occupational disease, the compensation
payable shall be reduced and limited to such proportion only of the
compensation that would be payable if the occupational disease were the
sole cause of the disability or death, as such occupational disease, as a
causative factor, bears to all the causes of such disability or death, such
reduction in compensation to be effected by reducing the number of
weekly or monthly payments or the amounts of such payments, as under
the circumstances of the particular case may be for the best interest of the
claimant or claimants.

(e) No compensation for death from an occupational disease shall be
payable to any person whose relationship to the deceased employee or
workman arose subsequent to the beginning of the first compensable
disability save only to afterborn children.

(f) The provisions of K.S.A. 44-570, and amendments thereto, shall
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(g) (1) Notwithstanding any provisions of the workers compensation act to the contrary, the following provisions shall apply to a claim based on a diagnosis of COVID-19.

(A) In the case of employment that includes contact with or work in proximity to or in the same space as the public or co-workers, there shall be a rebuttable presumption that the COVID-19 disease arose out of and in the course of the employment in which the employee was engaged under such employer and was contracted while the employee was so engaged, and that the employment was the prevailing factor in causing the COVID-19. In any event in such a case, a requirement that the COVID-19 resulted from the nature of the employment, as defined in subsection (b), shall not apply. The claimant shall not be required to prove that the COVID-19 resulted from the nature of the employment, as defined in subsection (b), and had its origin in a special risk of such disease connected with the particular type of employment and resulted from that source.

(B) A claim shall not be denied on the basis that the disease of COVID-19 is considered an ordinary disease of life or a hazard of disease attending employment in general.

(C) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the COVID-19 was the sole cause or the prevailing factor of any resulting disability, disablement, impairment or death.

(2) The provisions of this subsection shall be effective retroactively to January 1, 2020.

(3) The provisions of this subsection shall expire on May 1, 2021, unless the legislature acts to reauthorize such provisions.

(4) If any provision of this subsection or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this subsection that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this subsection are declared to be severable.

Sec. 2. K.S.A. 2019 Supp. 44-5a01 is hereby repealed.

Sec. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the Kansas register.