Rural Area Impact Statement:

1. **Types and numbers of rural areas:** The rule implements bill A9466/S8795 creating a new eligibility standard for certain construction employees and impacts all covered employers who employ construction employees wherever they may be located in the State, including rural areas.

2. **Reporting, recordkeeping and other compliance requirements; and professional services:** The same compliance requirements apply to rural areas as metropolitan ones. Rural employers should not need any new professional services to comply with this rule. It is economically and technologically feasible for rural businesses to comply with the proposed amendments. Although there will be updates to the forms to reflect the new eligibility standard, those forms will be available on the Workers' Compensation Board's (Board) website the same way the current request forms are available. If carriers choose not to use the forms available on the Board's website but instead brand their own forms in accordance with the regulations, they will need to update their systems with the updated form(s).

3. **Costs:** Compliance with the proposed regulations should generally not impose increased compliance costs on rural employers. The new eligibility standard is for certain Paid Family Leave (PFL) construction employees who are in the employment of a covered employer – employers who already have to abide by the PFL law.

4. **Minimizing adverse impact:** The proposed amendments are not anticipated to have an adverse impact on rural areas. The proposal is implementing the bill that was signed in February and provides clarity – the bulk of the changes are simply adding language reflecting the new eligibility standard created by the bill. To not update the regulations would certainly cause more adverse impacts, including confusion and possible denials and needless requests for arbitration.

5. **Rural area participation:**

   The Board does not have a rural area database but has sent an electronic communication describing the proposal to all insurer, self-insured employer, third party administrators, workers, and employers/businesses subscribers for Board updates. The Board will duly consider all public comments received from rural areas during the public comment period.