

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

March 22, 2021

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the AFL-CIO to urge you to co-sponsor the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Services Workers Act (H.R. 1195). This bill, sponsored by Rep. Joe Courtney (CT-02), would direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue a federal workplace violence prevention standard to protect workers in health care and social services from injury and death. This important legislation passed the House during the 116th Congress with 251 votes and strong bipartisan support. We expect the 117th Congress to do the same.

Workplace violence is a serious and growing safety and health problem that has reached epidemic levels. Workplace violence is the third leading cause of job death, and results in more than 30,000 serious lost-time injuries each year. Nurses, medical assistants, emergency responders and social workers face some of the greatest threats, suffering more than 72% of all workplace assaults. Women workers particularly are at risk, suffering two out of every three serious workplace violence injuries.

An OSHA standard under H.R. 1195 would protect these workers by requiring employers in the health care and social service sectors to develop and implement a workplace violence prevention plan, tailored to specific workplaces and worker populations. As part of the plan, employers would be required to work with employees to identify and correct hazards, develop systems for reporting threats of violence and injuries, provide training for workers and management and protect workers from retaliation for reporting workplace violence incidents. Common sense prevention measures include alarm devices, lighting, security, and surveillance and monitoring systems to reduce the risk of violent assaults and injuries.

The requirements for a workplace violence prevention plan are based upon existing recommendations from OSHA, NIOSH and professional associations, and scientific studies have found these guidelines to significantly reduce the incidence of workplace violence. Similar measures have been adopted in a number of states and implemented by some employers. Currently, however, there is no federal OSHA workplace standard, which would ensure these measures are in place. The majority of healthcare and social service workers lack effective protection and remain at serious risk while OSHA has been slow to act.

We extend our greatest thanks to Rep. Courtney and Chairman Scott for championing this bill through the Committee on Education and Labor in the 116th Congress, and for their leadership on eventual passage with a strong bipartisan majority. The House must act quickly to send this bipartisan legislation to the Senate, and then to the President's desk.

We urge you to support and co-sponsor H.R. 1195 to help protect health care and social service workers from the growing threat of workplace violence and unnecessary injury and death.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Samuel".

William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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