

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

March 28, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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. 1309). This bill, sponsored by Rep. Joe Courtney (D – Conn.) would direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue a federal workplace violence prevention standard to protect workers in health care and social services from injury and death.

Workplace violence is a serious and growing safety and health problem that has reached epidemic levels. Workplace violence is now the third leading cause of job deaths, and results in more than 28,000 serious lost-time injuries each year. Nurses, medical assistants, emergency responders and social workers face some of the greatest threats, suffering more than 70% of all workplace assaults. Women workers particularly are at risk, suffering two out of every three serious workplace violence injuries.

H.R. 1309 would help 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 workplace and employee populations. As part of the plan, employers would be required 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. The bill ensures that frontline workers have input, helping employers identify common sense measures like alarm devices, lighting, security, and surveillance and monitoring systems to reduce the risk of violent assaults and injuries.

The bill's requirements for the workplace violence prevention plan are based upon existing guidelines and recommendations from OSHA, NIOSH and professional associations. Scientific studies have documented that the implementation of such prevention plans significantly reduces the incidence of workplace violence. Similar measures have been adopted in a number of states and implemented by some employers. However, currently there is no federal OSHA workplace standard, and OSHA has been slow to take action. The majority of healthcare and social service workers lack effective protection and remain at serious risk.

We urge you to support and co-sponsor H.R. 1309 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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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