

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

June 10, 2019

The Honorable Robert C. Scott, Chairman
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

I am writing on behalf of the AFL-CIO to urge you to vote for the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Services Workers Act (H.R. 1309) when it is marked up in the Committee on Education and Labor tomorrow. This bill 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.

The bill has broad support from health care professionals, safety and health professionals and healthcare unions including the National Association of Social Workers, American Public Health Association, American Industrial Hygiene Association and American Society of Safety Professionals.

We urge you to vote for H.R. 1309, and to oppose any weakening amendments, to help protect health care and social service workers from the growing threat of workplace violence and unnecessary injury and death.

Sincerely,



William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

815 16th St., N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006 • 202-637-5000 • www.aflcio.org

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