



LEGISLATIVE ALERT

April 13, 2021

Dear Representative:

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. 1195) when it is brought to the floor this week. This bill 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. We also urge you to oppose Keller # 6.

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.

The AFL-CIO opposes Keller # 6, the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute, as it will continue to delay protections for workers and will weaken the underlying protections of H.R. 1195. Working people need protection from workplace violence now, and should not have to wait seven years or more, the average time it takes for OSHA to issue a safety and health standard. It has been over four years since OSHA issued a Request for Information on workplace violence. Since this initial step, the agency has not taken additional action.

In recognition of the urgency to protect these workers from dangerous assaults, we support the underlying bill, which requires OSHA to develop an interim standard within one year and a final standard within 42 months. OSHA issued its first guidance to employers on protecting health care and social service workers from workplace violence 25 years ago in 1996. These frontline workers cannot wait any longer; their lives are in danger.

The underlying 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. Also, this important legislation passed the House during the 116th Congress with 251 votes and continues to have strong bipartisan support.

We urge you to support H.R. 1195 to help protect health care and social service workers from the growing threat of workplace violence and unnecessary injury and death. We also urge you to oppose any Motion to Recommit, which would have the effect of killing the bill.

Sincerely,



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Director, Government Affairs

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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