

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

December 15, 2022

Dear Representative:

The AFL-CIO urges you to vote in support of HR 1948, the VA Employee Fairness Act. The VA Employee Fairness Act is a bipartisan bill that provides the same collective bargaining rights to tens of thousands of frontline employees at the VA who care for our nation's veterans as other federal employees at the VA.

Current VA personnel policy is determined by sections of Title 38 of the U.S. Code that allows the VA the discretion to exempt certain clinicians at VA medical centers, including doctors, registered nurses, and dentists, from the same collective bargaining rights as other VA employees. As a result, Title 38 clinicians are unable to collectively bargain over matters concerning professional conduct or competence including direct patient care, compensation, and peer review. The VA restricts collective bargaining by medical professionals over the same issues that are available to their counterparts employed by the Department of Defense and the private sector. Under the VA's current interpretation of Title 38, VA clinicians are unable even to grieve incorrect paychecks.

Title 38 collective bargaining restrictions are arbitrary and make it more difficult to provide the best care to our nation's veterans. Extending collective bargaining to VA clinicians will address ongoing hiring and retention issues at VA medical centers, and improve patient care by ensuring protection of VA employees who come forward to expose problems that negatively impact care. The right to collectively bargain does not protect low performers, harm employers in the private sector or the federal government and provides a process for employees to improve workplace conditions that impact patient care.

The care we provide veterans is one of the most important government functions. The VA Employee Fairness Act is an important step to ensure that Title 38 clinicians can collectively bargain over the workplace issues that impact their ability to care for veterans. I strongly urge you to vote in support of 1948, the VA Employee Fairness Act.

Sincerely,



William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs