



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Chair Alma Adams (NC-12)

Joint Subcommittee on Workforce Protections and Civil Rights and Human Services Hearing

Protecting Lives and Livelihoods: Vaccine Requirements and Employee Accommodations

Zoom

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 | 10:15 a.m.

Today, we are examining the role of workplace vaccine policies in protecting workers against COVID-19 and accelerating our economic recovery.

I want to begin by reiterating a basic fact that should guide today's discussion: COVID-19 vaccines are the most effective tool that we have to save workers' lives and defeat the pandemic.

Roughly 80 percent of American adults have received at least one dose, and can confidently say that vaccines are safe, effective, and necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and in our workplaces.

Yet, with more than 82 million people not yet vaccinated, far too many of our nation's workers are still suffering from the worst workplace safety crisis in recent history.

Workplace COVID-19 outbreaks are continuing to endanger workers and their families. And many of these outbreaks have been linked to unvaccinated workers.

Thankfully, we've seen responsible employers take the initiative to implement workplace safety policies, including vaccination requirements, to keep their employees safe.

Some of the largest employers in the country, including Bank of America in my district, already have vaccination requirements. And more companies are stepping up to require vaccinations each week.

After months of the vaccine being free and available, it is clear that the most effective way to boost vaccination rates is through workplace vaccination requirements.

This is why the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is expected to soon issue an emergency temporary standard, or ETS, that requires employers to implement vaccination and testing policies for their workers.

This standard would go a long way toward fulfilling our ultimate responsibility during this pandemic, which is to save lives and end the pandemic.

I hope that all my colleagues will agree that workplace vaccination requirements are a critical tool to *safely* reopen our economy and protect the health of workers, their families, and their communities.

I want to thank our witnesses today. I am now pleased to recognize the Ranking Member of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee, Mr. Keller, for the purpose of making an opening statement.