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March 22, 2021

Members of the Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I urge you to support the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1195), which protects workers and their right to be safe from violence at their workplace. H.R. 1195 requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue a standard on workplace violence prevention in health care and social service assistance settings.

Enactment of H.R. 1195 is needed because:

- **The current OSHA guidance is voluntary.** Employers are not required to focus on the high risk of violence on the job for health care workers and social service workers. Some 70 percent of all nonfatal workplace assaults typically occur in these two sectors and has increased over the years.
- **Employers can plan for and reduce the risk of workplace violence.** The bill challenges the myth that workplace violence is random, unpreventable, and just part of the job. Even with a degree of uncertainty, workplace violence has clear patterns and detectable risk factors in health care and social service settings.
- **The cost of inaction is extremely high.** Workplace violence takes its toll through the pain, loss, suffering and the disruption to lives. Workplace violence harms workers, their families and communities.

Front-line health care workers are being attacked during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Fifty-two paramedics and emergency medical technicians in New York City have been attacked from January to mid-March of this year. At this pace, more than 200 EMTs and paramedics will experience violence on the job this year — a 43 percent surge from the 140 assaulted in 2020.
- In December 2020, an individual at a group home in Illinois stabbed an AFSCME Council 31 member in the hand.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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- In January 2021, a client with disabilities broke the wrist of an AFSCME Council 31 member.
- In February 2021, a New Mexico patient threw a nurse and member of AFSCME District 1199NM against a wall, smashing her head. The patient then attacked another staff member. Thanks to the intervention of a worker in housekeeping, the patient was kept in check until security arrived.
- In early March 2021, a teen being helped onto a stretcher bit the face of an FDNY EMS Paramedic and AFSCME Local 2507 member who has extensive injuries and possibly permanent facial scars and disfigurement.

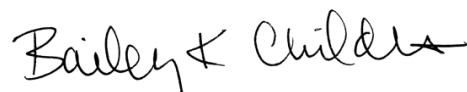
H.R. 1195 does not require a “one-size-fits all” Workplace Violence Prevention Plan:

Some may claim that hospitals are already focused on preventing workplace violence but a “one-size-fits all” OSHA standard will not help. H.R. 1195 rejects a cookie cutter solution and instead requires a customized plan to meet the specific settings and unique risks or vulnerabilities of each workplace. The workplace violence prevention plan required in H.R. 1195 must:

- be developed and implemented with the meaningful participation of direct care employees and their representatives;
- be tailored and specific to conditions and hazards for the facility or the covered service; and
- be tailored to reflect patient-specific risk factors and risk factors specific to each work area.

We ask that you send a clear message that Congress will not ignore the harm and suffering caused to health care, behavioral health, and social service workers by workplace violence. Please vote in support of H.R. 1195.

Sincerely,



Bailey K. Childers
Director of Federal Government Affairs

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