



March 23, 2021

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

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 1.7 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, including nearly 200,000 healthcare professionals, I thank Chairman Bobby Scott for bringing H.R. 1195, the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, before the committee, and I urge you to vote in support of Congressman Joe Courtney's crucial legislation.

This bipartisan bill is straightforward and needed, requiring employers to develop violence prevention plans and establishing whistleblower protections so that healthcare and social service workers don't fear retaliation for speaking out against what they see in the workplace.

This is not an abstract issue for me. I hear from AFT healthcare members about violence all the time: a nurse choked to the point of unconsciousness, a nurse stabbed, members who have suffered bone fractures and brain injuries from being thrown against walls and floors. Subcommittee Chairwoman Alma Adams held an important hearing on workplace violence last Congress, where an AFT member shared the following:

He then spun around on his back and kicked his leg high into the air striking me in the neck, hitting with such force to my throat that my head snapped backward; I heard this "bang" and "pop," and all the air just rushed out of me. ... Since June 2015, I have been diagnosed with moderate to severe post-traumatic stress disorder, moderate anxiety, insomnia, depressive disorder and social phobia related to this incident. ... I LOVED being a nurse. I have a huge problem still calling myself a nurse. I do not know what to call myself now. There is a deep loss when you used to make a difference in the lives of people, in your true calling and with passion. Now, that space is filled with extreme sadness and fear. ... I lost my career.

Violence is not just "part of the job." No one should face violence, intimidation or fear for their safety while working to heal others and save lives. Sadly, healthcare and social service workers are nearly five times more likely to be assaulted while on the job than the rest of our workforce. The costs of this violence are high: in injury rates, in professionals being driven from doing the work they love, and in workers' compensation claims and staff shortages.

Our nurses, health techs, social service workers and other health professionals need more than nightly applause; they need enforceable federal protections to keep them safe from the epidemic of workplace violence and other serious hazards they face at work. These are the people who take care of us when we need them, who have devoted their careers to looking after the aging, the sick and the injured, but are forced to beg Congress for basic workplace rights.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Nurses and Health
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I urge you to support the nurses, social workers and other healthcare professionals in your
district by voting for committee approval of the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health
Care and Social Service Workers Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Weingarten
President

RW : emc opeiu #2 afl-cio