

Union Leaders on New GAO Report Outlining Additional Efforts Needed to Help Protect Healthcare Workers from Workplace Violence

“Nurses and other frontline caregivers do some of the most physically and emotionally taxing work imaginable, providing quality care to patients in their hour of need. They’ve chosen this vocation in spite of its challenges. What they ask for in return for their dedication and professionalism are reasonable measures to protect them in their workplaces. Right now, there is an enormous, growing, underreported crisis of workplace violence in healthcare. Today’s GAO report makes that all too clear. It’s time to treat workplace violence in healthcare settings with the seriousness this crisis warrants. We urge OSHA to promulgate a national standard. Healthcare professionals, patients, and visitors deserve nothing less.” —**Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers**

“For too long USW members working in health care have lived with the knowledge that they can be a victim of violence just by going to work. It affects health care workers in all job classifications and in all facilities. Workplace violence is preventable. Health care workers can no longer accept that violence from patients and their families is just part of the job.” — **Leo W. Gerard, President United Steelworkers International**

“Showing up to work should not mean putting your life on the line, and violence is not ‘part of the job.’ We have a duty to make all healthcare facilities safe for patients and staff by mandating and implementing a clear standard for employers to ensure a safer workplace environment. This report brings us one step closer to achieving that goal, and now OSHA must take enforcement action to address this national crisis so that our dedicated healthcare workers can focus on providing quality care to those who most need it, rather than worrying about whether or not they will make it home to their families at the end of the day.” —**Lee Saunders, President AFSCME**

“We know that healthcare workers are the most assaulted workers in the nation, accounting for almost sixty percent of violent assaults on the job. We also know that too often SEIU members are told that violence at work is ‘part of the job.’ This report is an important step towards changing this ‘part of the job’ culture our members deal with.” —**Mary Kay Henry, President of the Service Employees International Union**

“The GAO report demonstrates what we already know from our members—it is past time for federal action to protect healthcare workers across the nation, as rates of violence are on the rise and increasing in severity. National Nurses United has been fighting for workplace violence protections for years—in Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, Texas, Illinois, Florida, and other states. Last year, nurses in California won a landmark law that mandates all hospitals to implement workplace violence prevention plans as enforced by California-OSHA. But not all states have their own OSHA program to do enforcement. To fully protect all healthcare workers in the nation, we need a strong federal OSHA standard requiring workplace violence prevention plans in all hospitals and healthcare facilities. And we need it now.” —**Bonnie Castillo, National Nurses United Director of Health and Safety**

“The American Federation of Government Employees represents tens of thousands of nurses, doctors and frontline health care providers across government. Their safety, and the safety of all health care workers, is critically important. We strongly support the GAO’s recommendations for reducing workplace violence across the health care system, and we encourage OSHA to move forward with adopting a national standard for enforcing safe working conditions for our health care providers.” — **J. David Cox Sr., President AFGE National**