



March 26, 2019

Dear Representative,

**On behalf of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), I urge you to cosponsor Representative Joe Courtney's recently introduced Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, H.R. 1309.**

Health care and social service workers devote their professional lives to bettering the health and well-being of their patients. However, due to their daily direct contact with a large number of patients and clients, these workers face a greater risk of becoming a victim of on the job violence than workers in most occupations. A 2016 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) study concluded that rates of violence against healthcare workers are up to 12 times higher than rates of violence for the overall workforce.

Health care and social service workers who are called on to help us and our families in times of need deserve a safe and secure work environment. To help fulfill this need, Representative Joe Courtney has introduced legislation to help protect these workers from violence on the job. This legislation would instruct the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) to issue a workplace violence prevention standard requiring employers in the health care and social service sectors to develop and implement a plan to protect their employees from workplace violence.

**The Machinists Union urges you to help improve the safety of health care and social service workers by cosponsoring this important legislation, the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act, H.R. 1309.** To cosponsor, please contact Maria Costigan in Congressman Joe Courtney's office at [maria.costigan@mail.house.gov](mailto:maria.costigan@mail.house.gov).

For more information, please contact IAM Legislative Director Hasan Solomon at (301)967-4575 or [hsolomon@iamaw.org](mailto:hsolomon@iamaw.org).

Thank you,

Robert Martinez, Jr.  
International President

## Protect Health Care and Social Service Workers from Violence on the Job

### *Cosponsor H.R. 1309 the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act*

Endorsing Organizations: American Nurses Association, American Psychiatric Nurses Association, American Federation of Teachers, American Industrial Hygiene Association, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, American Federation of Government Employees, ElevatingHOME, Emergency Nurses Association, International Association of Fire Fighters, National Nurses United, National Association of Social Workers, Public Citizen, SEIU, Teamsters, United Steelworkers, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

Dear Colleague:

Health care and social service workers show up every day to improve their patients' health and well being – however – these workers face an outsized risk of on-the-job violence, according to Department of Labor data. Nurses, emergency room physicians, social workers, psychiatric facility aides, and other health care and social service workers report that violence--most often from patients and those accompanying them--results in injury, loss of productivity, and serious safety concerns. A 2016 GAO study reported that **rates of violence against health care workers are up to 12 times higher than rates for the overall workforce**. In 2017, nearly 70% of all nonfatal workplace assaults occurred in the health care and social service sectors. A 2018 survey conducted by the American College of Emergency Physicians found that 47% of emergency room doctors have been physically assaulted at work, and 8 in 10 workers surveyed report that this violence is affecting patient care.

I found these findings both troubling and unacceptable, especially given that these employees are entrusted to treat us in times of need, care for our children and elderly relatives, and provide medical and social service expertise. Researchers have identified evidence-based methods for reducing the severity and frequency of violent incidents in these settings, and these tools should be more widely employed. Failing to protect this vital workforce in their place of employment diminishes the importance of the work they do to keep us safe and healthy.

To address these rising rates of violence, I introduced H.R. 1309, the *Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act*. This legislation will require the Occupational Health and Safety Administration to issue a workplace violence prevention standard requiring employers in the health care and social service sectors to develop and implement a plan to protect their employees from workplace violence. These plans will be tailored to the specific workplace and employee population, but may include training on de-escalation techniques, personal alarm devices, surveillance and monitoring systems, or other strategies identified by the employers and employees to keep workers safe. While OSHA has already issued voluntary guidance to employers on how to prevent violence in these workplaces, data from BLS as well as personal testimony from workers about continuing violence shows that voluntary guidance is not sufficient. An enforceable standard is required to prevent the types of violence that are prevalent in too many of our hospitals, nursing homes, and social service settings.

For more information or to cosponsor the bill, contact [maria.costigan@mail.house.gov](mailto:maria.costigan@mail.house.gov). For background, check out this short investigative report video: <https://www.newsy.com/stories/violence-against-nurses-is-up-while-osha-enforcement-is-down/> and this 2018 article about the legislation: <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/16/18098696/house-bill-violence-health-care-workers>

Sincerely,  
Joe Courtney