



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
For science. For action. For health.

April 16, 2019

The Honorable Joe Courtney
2332 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Courtney:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write to thank you for introducing H.R. 1309, the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Services Workers Act. This important legislation would require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop a workplace violence prevention standard to protect workers who are at the greatest risk from violence on the job.

Workplace violence is a serious problem that has increased substantially in the last decade. Every day, nurses, psychiatric aides, social workers and other caretakers are assaulted on the job. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2017 health care and social service workers experienced the highest rate of workplace violence injuries at 13.7 per 10,000 workers, compared to a national average of 2.9 for all workers. In the same year, psychiatric hospitals had the highest ever recorded rate of serious injury due to workplace violence at 181.1 per 10,000 workers. Since 2009, the rate of serious workplace violence injuries has increased by 69% in health care and social assistance jobs. Health care and social service workers are at greatest risk because they are on the frontlines of patient and client care, often working with high-risk populations who need specialized care and attention. This type of violence has a significant and long-lasting impact on individual workers and on the public's health.

Assaults and other violence experienced by health care and social assistance workers is a preventable problem that requires a public health approach. Your legislation would require employers who operate health care facilities, mental health clinics, emergency services and home care to develop a workplace violence prevention plan. These plans have shown to be effective and the tools for preventing violence in these workplaces are available, such as emergency response alarms, improved lighting and safe staffing levels.

Thank you again for introducing this legislation which is a critical step in protecting our caregivers from work-related violence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director