

April 29, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned 202 worker rights, public health, and consumer advocacy organizations urge Congress to pass the COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act of 2020. This bill will require the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) to immediately issue an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to protect all workers who continue to go to work during the pandemic from exposure to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Without specific safety mandates, businesses are left with little direction, and the result is rapid spread of the disease in the workplace and into our communities. This is needed not just for those who are currently still working but is equally important as we make plans to re-open the economy, so that employers will implement adequate precautions to ensure that unsafe conditions do not lead to a second wave of infections.

Currently, there is only one OSHA standard enforcing the protection of workers from infectious diseases, and it applies only to bloodborne pathogens. There is no standard protecting workers from COVID-19. Though OSHA should have issued an ETS weeks ago, it has not done so and indicated no willingness to do so. Workers have no protections—they are on their own in this pandemic.

Therefore, Congress must take the important step of requiring OSHA to issue mandated protections that will help reduce the spread in the workplace. Many thousands of workers have already become ill from workplace exposure to COVID-19 and hundreds have died. The number of confirmed cases and fatalities in the workplace that are related to COVID-19 are growing exponentially every day.

For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that over 16,000 healthcare workers have been infected to date with coronavirus, and over 41 have died. Due to lack of access to testing in many parts of the country, we know this number represents only a fraction of the frontline healthcare workers who are sacrificing their personal health and well-being to provide medical care to patients.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also spread through many other workplaces including grocery stores¹, meatpacking² and poultry plants, warehouses, and among transportation³ workers to name a few—sickening thousands and killing dozens and dozens of workers just in the last two weeks. Furthermore, these jobs have high concentrations of women and Black and brown workers, exposing our most vulnerable communities⁴ to further economic inequities in addition to inadequate safety protections.

Worker reports from all over the country are exposing the fault lines in our prevention efforts. Workers are required to congregate in break rooms, in locker rooms, are working shoulder to shoulder or are interacting with the public often with little or no protections⁵ from COVID-19.

CDC and OSHA have issued no mandates that require that employers implement any protective measures. All OSHA or CDC have released are voluntary guidance for employers to follow to mitigate workplace exposure to COVID-19. These guidance documents and posters are advisory, not enforceable. Employers can choose to implement these measures or ignore them. As the number of workers infected with and dying from this disease continues to grow, and as we see spread in communities where workers live, it is clear that a voluntary approach to worker safety is not mitigating this public health disaster.

As the public is being advised to practice safety precautions like frequent hand washing, social

distancing, sanitizing hands, and wearing masks, the federal government must ensure that all workers have the same health and safety precautions in place and provided by their employers.

Worker health is public health. We urge you to pass the COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act to protect our brave and valuable workers, which will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect our communities and the public.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance
Advocating Opportunity
AFSCME
Air Line Pilots Association International
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Allied Progress
American Association for Justice
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Public Health Association
American Public Health Association/APHN
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Animal Legal Defense Fund
APHA Public Health Nursing Section
Arizona Center for Economic Progress
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
BCTGM International Union
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
BlueGreen Alliance
Border Workers United
Bucks County Central Labor Council
Cathleen Dennis RN and consumer
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Progressive Reform
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa
Central Iowa Center for Independent Living
Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.
Centro Legal de la Raza
Chicago Jobs Council
Chicago's Legal Aid Society
Child Welfare League of America
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs

Colorado Fiscal Institute
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Consumer Federation of America
CRLA
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Economic Policy Institute
Environmental Health Strategy Center
Environmental Working Group
Equal Justice Center
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality North Carolina
Fair Work Center
Family Values @ Work
Farmworker Association of Florida
Farmworker Justice
Food & Water Action
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food Policy Action
Freedom Network USA
Futures Without Violence
Good Jobs First
Government Accountability Project
Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
HPAE
Human Impact Partners
Human Rights Watch
Indiana Institute for Working Families
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Interfaith Worker Justice of East Tennessee
International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC)
International Union, UAW
Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
IUE-CWA
Jobs to Move America
Jobs with Justice of East Tennessee

Justice At Last, Inc.
Justice at Work (Pennsylvania)
Justice for Migrant Women
Justice in Motion
Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor & the Working
Poor of Georgetown University
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kids Forward
Knox Area Workers' Memorial Day Committee
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
Labor Occupational Health Program
Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North
America
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Laundry, Dist. & Food Service Joint Bd. Workers
United
League of Conservation Voters (LCV)
Legal Aid at Work
Legal Aid Justice Center
Legal Voice
Local 881 United Food and Commercial
Workers (UFCW)
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety
& Health (MassCOSH)
Memphis Center for Independent Living
Michigan League for Public Policy
Migrant Clinicians Network
Mississippi Workers, A Center for Human
Rights
MomsRising
Montefiore Medical Center
Mujeres divinas
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the
Good Shepherd
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council for Occupational Safety &
Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Wildlife Federation
National Women's Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nebraska Appleseed
NELP Action Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Jersey Policy Perspective
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and
Occupational Health Policy
New York Committee for Occupational Safety
and Health
NJ State Industrial Union Council
NJSNA
Nontoxic Certified / MADE SAFE
North Carolina Justice Center
Northwest Workers' Justice Project
NYCOSH
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Oxfam America
PathWays PA
People's Parity Project
PhilaPOSH
Philaposh
PODER
Pride at Work
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Citizen
Public Health Nursing Section, American Public
Health Association
Public Justice
Public Justice Center
Restaurant Opportunities Center United
RESULTS DC
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union
(RWDSU)
RICOSH
SafeWork Washington
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition
Sciencecorps
SEIU HCPA
Shore Nurses Union/NYSNA
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
SPLC Action Fund
Steel Valley Authority (SVA)
Temp Worker Justice
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Coalition
The Forum for Youth Investment

The Fund for Community Reparations for
Autistic People of Color's Interdependence,
Survival, and Empowerment
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human
Rights
The Legal Aid Society
The University of New Mexico Hospital
Transport Workers Union of America
Tufts University School of Medicine
TWU Local 591
UFCW Local 152
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
UNITE HERE International Union
United Food and Commercial Workers
International Union
United Steelworkers (USW)
UnityPoint Health
University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public
Health
University of Louisville

University of Maryland
Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
Voices for Progress
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil
Rights and Urban Affairs
We are CASA
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
Western North Carolina Workers' Center
Williamson County and Cities Health District
WisCOSH, Inc.
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network
Work Environment Council of New Jersey
Worker Justice Center of New York
Workers Defense Project
Workers' Rights Clinic, James E. Rogers College
of Law, University of Arizona
Workers' Rights Institute, Georgetown Law
Center
Working Washington
Workplace Fairness
Worksafe

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/04/14/coronavirus-claims-lives-30-grocery-store-workers-union-says/2987754001/>

² <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/17/837530494/workers-advocate-says-south-dakota-pork-plant-delayed-action-on-coronavirus>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/nyregion/coronavirus-nyc-mta-subway.html>

⁴ <https://www.vox.com/coronavirus-covid19/2020/4/18/21226225/coronavirus-black-cdc-infection>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/business/economy/coronavirus-osh-workers.html>