

April XX, 2019

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you work to craft the FY 20 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, we urge you to support funding for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at a minimum of \$661 million. This amount would restore OSHA's authorized staffing levels to 2,335 and provide the same level of funding (adjusted for inflation) and personnel authorized in 2010. We also ask that you support funding for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), including its Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AgFF) sector program, Education and Research Centers (ERCs) and the Total Worker Health (TWH) program, at a minimum of \$346.3 million. This funding level includes \$27.5 million for AgFF, \$31 million for the ERCs, and at least level funding for TWH.

Daily, over 12,000 U.S. workers sustain injuries on the job that are serious enough to require medical consultation, 12 workers die from an unintentional injury suffered at work, and 145 workers die from work-related diseases.<sup>1,2</sup> This burden costs industry and citizens an estimated \$4.8 billion per week.<sup>3</sup>

OSHA ensures safe conditions for America's workers by setting and enforcing standards and providing training, outreach, education, and assistance to employers. OSHA regulations address issues such as the use of personal protective equipment, permissible exposure limits to hazardous materials, and industry-specific safety procedures. One of OSHA's most recognized cooperative programs, the Voluntary Protection Programs, recognizes employers who successfully implement effective safety and health management systems and maintain injury and illness rates below the national average for their industries. The agency's On-Site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH provides national leadership in the field by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating knowledge into products and services to support workplace safety.

NIOSH funding supports many important programs, including the AgFF, ERCs and TWH. The agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industry fatality rate is nearly 7 times that of the all-industry average. Yearly, about 18,000 workers in this sector are injured seriously enough to

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<sup>1</sup> National Safety Council. (2017). *Injury Facts®, 2017 Edition*.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh, J. P. (2011). Economic burden of occupational injury and illness in the United States. *Milbank Quarterly*, 89(4), 728-772

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

require time away from work.<sup>4</sup> Daily, an average of over 350 workers in this sector sustain injuries serious enough to require medical consultation, and more than one worker dies from an injury suffered at work.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, due to its decentralized nature and diverse structure, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector lags other industries in reducing the toll of work-related injuries and illnesses.

Directed by Congress, NIOSH established Centers for Agricultural Disease and Injury Research, Education and Prevention in 1990 in response to evidence that agricultural workers were suffering higher rates of injury and illness than other U.S. workers. Today, the initiative includes nine regional centers, and one national center to address children's farm safety. These centers have conducted research leading to evidence-based standards that save lives. It is the only substantive federal effort to ensure safe working conditions for workers in one of our nation's most vital production sectors.

With an aging occupational safety and health workforce, ERCs are essential to training the next generation of professionals. The Centers establish academic, labor and industry research partnerships to achieve these goals. Currently, the ERCs are responsible for supplying many of the country's OSH graduates who will go on to fill professional roles. With an aging occupational safety and health workforce, and a critical shortage of qualified OSH professionals, ERCs are essential to educating the next generation of professionals.

NIOSH supports education and research in occupational health through academic degree programs and research opportunities. The National Occupational Research Agenda continues to protect American workers through its work-related illness and injury research, and we urge that funding for this research continue. The TWH approach integrates workplace interventions that protect safety and health with activities that advance the overall well-being of workers.

In order to ensure the health and safety of our nation's workers, we respectfully request that you, at a minimum, fund OSHA at \$661 million and NIOSH at a minimum of \$346.3 million. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Note: CIHC signed on to this letter on April 2, 2019.

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2016). Table 2. numbers of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses by case type and ownership, selected industries, 2015. Retrieved March 24, 2017, from [http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/osh\\_10292015.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/osh_10292015.htm)

<sup>5</sup> National Safety Council. (2017). *Injury Facts®, 2017 Edition*