

March 27, 2017

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 18 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, we urge you to support funding for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at a minimum of \$573.8 million. This amount is level funded with the amount enacted for Fiscal Year 2016 (and the Fiscal Year 2017 Continuing Resolution) after adjusting for inflation. We also ask that you support funding for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), including its Education and Research Centers (ERCs) and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AgFF) sector program, at a minimum of its FY 16 funding level of \$339.121 million. This funding level includes \$26 million for AgFF and \$29.5 million for the ERCs.

Daily, about 12,000 U.S. workers sustain injuries on the job that are serious enough to require medical consultation, 11 workers die from an unintentional injury suffered at work, and 145 workers die from work-related diseases.^{1,2} This burden costs industry and citizens an estimated \$4.8 billion per week.³

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 and ERCs. 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

¹ National Safety Council. (2017). *Injury Facts*®, 2017 Edition.

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

³ Ibid

require time away from work.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.

NIOSH supports education and research in occupational health through academic degree programs and research opportunities. 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.

In order to ensure the health and safety of our nation's workers, we respectfully request that you, at a minimum, fund OSHA at \$573.8 million and NIOSH at its FY 16 funding level. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American Industrial Hygiene Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Safety Engineers
Board of Certified Safety Professionals
Campbell Institute
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Safety Council
ORCHSE Strategies, LLC
Prevention Institute

⁴ 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

⁵ National Safety Council. (2017). *Injury Facts*®, 2017 Edition