

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: As workplace infections and deaths rise, U.S. Sens. introduce SB to protect workers from COVID-19

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Ranking Member on the Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee, Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Patty Murray (D-WA), Ranking Member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today introduced legislation to protect U.S. workers from COVID-19 in response to disturbing, widespread reports of unsafe workplaces leading to preventable illnesses and deaths.

The *COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act* would require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard that establishes a legal obligation for all workplaces to implement comprehensive infectious disease exposure control plans to keep workers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 9,000 U.S. health care workers have been infected with COVID-19. Outbreaks have been reported at a wide range of workplaces across the country, including one meat processing plant where more than 500 workers were infected with the virus.

“We cannot combat this pandemic if we do not take immediate action to protect the millions of health care workers, food-service and grocery store workers, and all those working on the frontlines every day to confront this pandemic and move our economy forward,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “This legislation is the single best way to require all workplaces to protect the health and safety of their workers and

prevent additional outbreaks and further spread of the coronavirus.”

“Our nation’s health care workers are on the front lines as we work to defend Americans from COVID-19,” **said Senator Duckworth**. “They deserve to be as protected as they can be as they take on greater risks to keep the rest of us safe, and this legislation will help ensure they are.”

“Workers across the country who are facing significant health and safety risks as they continue to keep us healthy, fed, and safe during this pandemic deserve to be protected,” **said Senator Murray**. “We need clear, effective, and comprehensive requirements to ensure employees who continue to come into work across the country are kept safe. I’m proud to join Senator Baldwin in introducing this bill and I will continue to fight to protect workers and their families as we continue our coronavirus response.”

Although the CDC issued guidance to protect workers, the guidance is not binding and OSHA currently has no enforceable standard to protect workers from airborne infectious diseases, leaving the nation’s workers at an elevated risk of exposure to the coronavirus at a time when they are needed most.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act gives the Department of Labor the authority to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard if employees are exposed to grave danger from new hazards. However, despite repeated calls from Committee Democrats to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard, the Department has made no effort to establish enforceable safety standards to protect workers from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act directs OSHA to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard within 7 days that sets requirements for how workplaces must safeguard workers against the spread of the coronavirus. The legislation expands on a previous proposal, the COVID-19 Workers First Protection Act (S. 3584), by requiring OSHA to issue a standard covering all U.S. workers, including workers in health care facilities, warehouses, grocery stores, and food processing plants.

In addition to Baldwin, Duckworth and Murray, the legislation is cosponsored by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ron Wyden (D-OR) Tina Smith (D-MN), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN),

Bob Casey (D-PA), Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Tim Kaine (D-VA).

House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03), Workforce Protections Subcommittee Chairwoman Alma Adams (NC-12), and Congresswoman Donna Shalala (FL-27) and 27 colleagues introduced a companion bill in the House today, as well.

To read a fact sheet for the COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act of 2020, [click here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).