

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: As protections for workers are withdrawn, Baldwin joins colleagues in calling on Biden Administration to make permanent OSHA's emergency COVID-19 protections for health care workers

Posted on Friday, Jan 14, 2022

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – As the rise of the Omicron variant continues to threaten the safety of our nation's health care workforce, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is joining her colleagues in a letter calling on the Biden administration to make permanent the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) emergency COVID-19 protections for health care workers.

"We write to urge the Department of Labor to take all necessary steps to expeditiously issue a permanent standard to protect our nation's health care workers in the workplace. Particularly in the context of rising COVID-19 caseloads stemming from the spread of the Omicron variant, our nation's health care workers deserve a permanent, enforceable standard that will ensure their health and safety as they continue to work on the front lines of the pandemic response," **the Senators wrote.**

In June of 2021, OSHA issued an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) to protect the workers who have shouldered the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide clear standards detailing health care employers' responsibilities to the safety of their workers. The standard required employers to identify and control COVID-19 hazards in the workplace, provide access to personal protective

equipment (PPE) and adequate ventilation systems, and ensure workers are notified of workplace exposures to COVID-19. This standard also gave health care workers a tool against which to measure their workplace practices, and recourse to OSHA if they felt their workplace was out of compliance.

On December 27, 2021, six months after promulgation of the ETS, OSHA announced it was not ready to issue a permanent rule, and let the non-recordkeeping portions of the temporary standard expire. When OSHA issued the ETS in June 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had reported that 491,816 health care workers had contracted COVID-19 and 1,611 had died. Today, those numbers have nearly doubled, with the CDC reporting that 848,028 health care workers across the nation have contracted COVID-19. Without a permanent rule, the health and well-being of our nation's health care workers are at risk.

The letter, led by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), calls on OSHA to reverse course and put forth a permanent, enforceable standard, given the fact that health care workers still face serious safety challenges and workplace risks. Today, more than 120,000 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 nationwide, further straining overworked health care workers and hospitals facing severe staffing shortages. Recent reporting shows that overworked doctors, nurses, and staff have been forced to continue working in unsafe conditions and are concerned for their health and safety.

This letter is also signed by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Tina Smith (D-MN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Chris Murphy (D-CT). Congresswoman Dingell led a similar letter in the House of Representatives that has more than 100 co-signers.

This letter is endorsed by the AFL-CIO, NYS AFL-CIO, SEIU, 1199SEIU, 32BJ SEIU, and National Nurses United.

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