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Legislative Affairs & Advocacy Update

by Donna Zankowski MPH RN FAAOHN, Legislative Affairs Chairperson

AAOHN has been very busy advocating for occupational and environmental health nursing and the larger profession of occupational health for many months, and we want to do better at keeping you informed about our activity. We may also be asking for your help with advocacy efforts on issues of importance from time to time. This is one of those times.

You may already be familiar with the funding cuts and extreme reductions happening now at several federal agencies. NIOSH has been hit extremely hard, with an [over 90% reduction in personnel, and the elimination of vital programs](#), like the PPE approval unit, the Health Hazard Evaluation program, the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer, and the Coal Workers Health Surveillance program. In addition to losing these life-saving programs, the current plan is to eliminate all funding for the [NIOSH Education and Research Centers \(ERCs\)](#). These [ERCs are crucial to providing graduate level education](#) for the occupational health nursing profession, and for occupational medicine, industrial hygiene and safety professionals as well.

We cannot let this happen without first doing our best to make our voices be heard. We are asking our members to use the script provided below, to call your legislators (your Senators and Congressperson) and ask them to preserve NIOSH and its critical mission to protect American worker's health and safety. You can find your legislators by searching <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>, enter your zip code and proceed to the individual webpage of your legislator, where you will find contact information for their Washington D.C. office and their home district office. You can call either, but you must identify yourself as a constituent. It is unlikely you will be able to speak directly to your legislator, but you can ask to leave a message (using this script):

"Hi, my name is [Name] and I'm a constituent from [CITY, STATE]. I am extremely concerned about the severe cuts to NIOSH which will result in deaths, injuries, and illnesses to American workers while increasing costs and workforce shortages for US businesses. On April 1st, more than 90% of the NIOSH workforce was terminated. NIOSH delivers real-world impact—preventing workplace injuries, mitigating chronic exposures, addressing mental health challenges, and saving lives. The near elimination of NIOSH places our entire national occupational health infrastructure in jeopardy. We risk losing not only dedicated professionals and irreplaceable expertise, but also the pipeline of future OSH leaders and the foundational research needed to respond to new and existing workplace hazards. This risk is especially troubling for critical sectors like construction, mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare. NIOSH, created by statute, is a high-value investment in America's workforce who are the engine of our economy. We urge you to do everything possible to immediately reverse this tragedy for

American Workers so NIOSH can maintain efforts to keep Americans safe and well.
[add personal statement here, as appropriate]. Thank you for your time."
(NOTE: You must leave your full street address and city/state to ensure your call is tallied.)

We appreciate your help in advocating to preserve NIOSH and its mission. Please let us know if you receive any direct feedback from your legislator (more than the standard form letter), and if you would like any help with developing an ongoing connection with that legislator.

We would also like to thank those members who were able to attend the AAOHN Legislative Affairs Update and Advocacy Essentials webinar on May 5th. If you would like AAOHN to host more advocacy update webinars, or for any other legislative or advocacy related comments or questions, please contact info@AAOHN.org.