



February 24, 2011

Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

The American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) is the professional organization of 6,000 nurses working in business and industry who are committed to the health and safety of the American workforce. Our work decreases healthcare costs, increases engagement and productivity of the American workforce and fuels the economy of America. It is critical to the success of this nation.

We are writing to express our deep concern that the President's Fiscal 2012 budget proposes the elimination of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Education and Research Centers (ERCs). This will terminate the ERCs nationwide.

NIOSH supports 17 university-based Education and Research Centers (ERCs). The mission of the ERCs is to reduce work-related injuries and illnesses in the U.S. by performing prevention research and by educating high-quality professionals who daily implement programs to improve occupational health and safety. ERCs train occupational health nurses and provide continuing education to all sectors of the safety and health community. Collectively, the ERCs provide training and research resources to every Public Health Region in the United States. Many centers are collaborative efforts among several institutions in their region.

Our members are located throughout the United States and serve millions of workers each day. They use their local ERCs as resources for continuing education to ensure they are providing the best knowledge and skills for population health. Our national organization has had a long and successful relationship with our ERC colleagues. The Centers work collaboratively with us in providing research and education to members which results in healthier and safe workplaces. As an example, this year many of our ERC members have worked to help the organization create an international summit, to be held in Atlanta in April, where we will collaborate with our colleagues around the world to learn and work together for the health and safety of workers around the world. As you can imagine this saves lives, costs less health care dollars, allows for companies to spend money on creating new jobs for a better future.

ERC trainees are committed to reducing the daily toll on workers: each year almost 1.2 million workers are injured seriously enough to require time off work, and daily an average of 9,000 U.S. workers sustain disabling injuries on the job, 16 workers die from an injury suffered at work, and 137 workers die from work-related diseases. This burden costs industry and citizens about \$1 billion per week. The elimination of the ERCs as proposed in the President's budget

would limit the ability of workers to avoid exposures that can result in injury or illness, push back improved working conditions for workers and ultimately raise health care costs.

The ERCs provide programs in a unique group of disciplines that benefit employers of all sizes in every part of the country. The ERCs tracks job placement of students and career development; thus they can document that students enter and stay in a career path that utilizes their training.

I urge you to recognize the important contributions of the ERCs to the health and productivity of our nation's workforce by including funding in the Fiscal 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill for the Education and Research Centers within the budget for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kay N Campbell". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Kay N Campbell, EdD, RN-C, COHN-S, FAAOHN
President, AAOHN