

RESOLUTION

MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

WHEREAS: We are in a mental health crisis in this country, and workers feel the impact in the workplace and within their communities. A Mental Health focus is needed in every workplace and workers are impacted in every industry.

- Direct healthcare workers in hospitals are leaving their jobs in high numbers due to the moral injury, stress, and trauma they take on every day providing essential healthcare services and are unable to access mental health services without fear of repercussions in their careers.
- Workers in the construction industry are five times more likely to die by suicide due to the physical demands on their bodies along with the prevalent job insecurity of contract work.
- Educators are impacted by high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression from the demands of performing their duties in addition to having to self-fund classroom supplies and fearing personal injury while in the classroom due to a rash of gun violence in schools.

WHEREAS: Mental health challenges, toxic stress, and trauma are prevalent everywhere - including in the workplace. They can undermine workplace safety, employee wellness and success at work and organizational cultures. Trauma is much more widespread than most people realize and is often at the root of common mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression. Trauma forms new neural pathways, which can cause us to be anxious, depressed, angry or avoidant, depending on the individual. Mental health challenges, toxic stress, and unrecognized trauma are hidden drivers behind workplace challenges including absenteeism, low productivity and morale, burnout, turnover and unsafe workplaces.

WHEREAS: The state of Minnesota, in conjunction with the University of Minnesota, is already studying improving access to benefits for workers diagnosed with PTSD as part of Workers' Compensation as we know that many impacted workers are unable to access this necessary benefit and support due to employers denying that workers got PTSD on the job.

WHEREAS: Workers are active members of their communities. They care about robust mental health access for not just them at the workplace, but also for their communities, their children, and their family and friends. Mental illness, like physical illness, is part of the life-health experience. One in 25 Americans live with serious mental illness and more than half of the need is with children and adolescents. Untreated mental health conditions can be a significant barrier to learning and education success.

WHEREAS: The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) is a federal law that generally prevents group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) benefits from imposing less favorable benefit limitations on those benefits than on medical/surgical coverage.

WHEREAS: The State of Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity completed research identifying four main principles to building healthy workplaces including physical workplace, personal health resources, community involvement, and psychosocial characteristics of the workplace; and how improving these areas lead to lower suicide rates, lower substance use, and lower stress while minimizing negative factors and maximizing positive ones. Employees who agree their employers are engaged and care for their overall well-being are likely to stay in their job, experience less burnout, consider their employer a good place to work, be engaged at work, and thrive in their personal lives. Therefore, be it resolved that:

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO General Board, Mental Health and Safety Subcommittee, and Racial and Economic Justice Committee will go through the executive presentation with the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and look into additional ongoing training in areas such as Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) training and Mental Health First Aid, and be it further

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO will support legislation that improves working conditions for all workers and access to mental health services when needed, increases trauma-informed care and de-escalation training in the workplace, mental health grants for healthcare workers, and accessible and affordable mental healthcare in our communities that provides both intervention and prevention - including increasing access to quality mental health support for children and adolescents, and be it further

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO will advocate for an improved Workers' Compensation system that enables workers with PTSD and other mental health diagnoses to access the benefits and supports without re-traumatizing the applicants, and be it further

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO will promote awareness of mental health issues by providing education and training on mental health parity and recognizing signs of mental health challenges and how to respond, including the intersection of physical health and mental health, and ensure the workers have access to mental

health support services, such as counseling, therapy, and hotlines, either through company programs, partnerships with external organizations, and advocate for mental health by raising awareness about the importance of mental health well-being and destigmatizing mental health concerns, and be it further

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO will keep a list of shared materials around mental health and safety including example contract language other unions have successfully negotiated into their contracts, resources they have identified for their ongoing mental health work, as well as resources from mental health partners in Minnesota and Nationally, and be it further

RESOLVED: The MN AFL-CIO will support workers and retirees who seek to advocate for better healthcare including strengthening mental health parity and seeking better mental health services such as therapy, access to treatment centers, etc. (and/or support legislation to expand access to these services).

Resolution passed, as amended, by the MN AFL-CIO General Board on June 18, 2024