

# **Testimony in support of Protections for Worker Safety (HB 26-1054) before the Colorado House Committee on Business Affairs and Labor**

**Testimony** • By **Nina Mast** • February 24, 2026

House Committee on Business Affairs and Labor

February 26, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Ricks, Vice Chair Camacho, and members of the committee,

My name is Nina Mast, and I'm a policy and economic analyst at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). EPI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank founded in 1986 to research the economic status of working America and propose public policies that protect and improve conditions for low- and middle-wage workers.

I'm here today to testify in support of [HB 26-1054](#), a bill to strengthen Colorado workers' right to a safe workplace. HB 26 represents an opportunity for Colorado to continue showing leadership in efforts to protect all workers—both adults and minors—from preventable workplace injuries or fatalities.

As a national expert on state labor standards—including state standards to prevent young workers from exposure to hazardous occupations— I have had the opportunity to work on many state-level efforts to improve state workplace laws—including in Colorado. I regularly encourage policymakers to look to Colorado as a leader in making crucial and innovative updates to its standards both through legislation and administrative rulemaking. HB 26 is an important next step for Colorado to take in this direction at a time when long-standing federal workplace health and safety standards are at risk.

Since the 1970 passage of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act first established basic nationwide workplace health and safety standards, OSHA has saved [tens of thousands of lives](#) and prevented millions of injuries. Unfortunately, federal OSHA today faces [numerous threats](#) including diminished enforcement capacity, efforts to block important and long-overdue new worker protection standards, and—notably—efforts to weaken the statute's general duty clause, which ensures foundational safety protections to all workers, regardless of the occupation or industry they work in. The Trump administration has proposed carving entire industries out of coverage under the “general duty” clause. This disastrous proposal could leave many workers without any federally guaranteed right to protection from known and preventable workplace hazards.

Given the inadequacies of current federal OSHA enforcement and the risk that existing minimum federal standards could soon be eroded further, it's crucial for states to step in to protect their workers.

HB 26 not only enshrines the long-standing intention of the general duty clause into state law, but it also goes further to ensure stronger protections from workplace illnesses and injuries for Colorado workers today. Specifically, the bill creates a general duty of employers to provide “reasonable and adequate” protections for all workers and comply with all standards adopted through administrative rulemaking. The bill also empowers the state attorney general and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to refer cases for investigation and recover penalties to be used for enforcement.

And—importantly—it provides labor organizations and individuals harmed on the job with

the option to file civil actions and pursue statutory damages in cases in which employers violate legal obligations to provide a safe workplace. These provisions will strengthen enforcement of the law, encourage reporting of unsafe working conditions by workers who report abuse at great personal risk, and more meaningfully deter violations.

As a national organization that convenes a network of state research and policy organizations, we have been closely tracking the implications of federal actions for workers at the state level. In the past year, OSHA has faced unprecedented threats to its enforcement capabilities, and aggressive immigration enforcement will make workers **even less likely** to feel safe reporting unsafe conditions at work. Because of these threats, state lawmakers have an opportunity and responsibility to **resist the erosion of hard-won worker protections** and take up the mantle of advancing workers' right to a safe workplace. The sponsors of this bill have shown that they take this commitment seriously, and we urge all members of this committee and the Colorado General Assembly to do the same by supporting the passage of HB 26.

Thank you.