

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

WASHINGTON, DC – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Loren Sweatt of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will testify at the House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee’s hearing on May 28, 2020. At this hearing she will inform the Committee of the important work the men and women of OSHA have been doing to keep workers safe and healthy in this critical time. Since January, OSHA has been preparing workplaces for the effects of the coronavirus. At the hearing, Ms. Sweatt will inform the Committee of the following facts:

“OSHA operates every hour of every day, as it has for nearly half-a-century following the enactment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. I am proud of the work this agency has done during the Trump Administration, but I am particularly proud of the work it is performing right now as it responds to the worldwide health crisis. I welcome this opportunity to update you on all of the agency’s efforts.”

“OSHA’s efforts to address COVID-19 have been its top priority since February. Our world changed with the arrival and spread of the coronavirus. Although the pandemic has changed the way OSHA completes its mission, it has never faltered in its commitment to ensure employers provide a workplace free of hazards. OSHA quickly pivoted to focus intensely on giving employers and workers the guidance they need to work safely in this rapidly changing situation; where appropriate, OSHA has also enforced safety and health requirements.”

“While extensive guidance is important as the rapidly changing dynamic of this pandemic continues, it is important to recognize OSHA also has existing standards that serve as the basis for its COVID-19 enforcement. Those standards include rules regarding respiratory protection, personal protective equipment (PPE), eye and face protection, sanitation, and hazard communication.”

“OSHA is also an active participant in ten federal task forces focused on the COVID-19 response and as always, continues its collaborations with its federal partners to share information and develop tools to meet the challenges of fighting this disease and protecting workers.”

“The work of the agency continues uninterrupted even as we respond to this pandemic. Since February 1, 2020, and through May 21, 2020, OSHA has received 5,978 non-COVID-19 complaints and conducted 5,009 investigations based on these complaints and 969 inspections. During this time, OSHA has received 2,380 non-COVID-19 whistleblower complaints, which are being evaluated along with the COVID-19 whistleblower complaints.

“During Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, OSHA conducted 33,401 inspections—more inspections than in each of the previous three fiscal years.”

“OSHA also provided a record 1,392,611 workers with training on safety and health requirements in FY 2019.”

“The Department’s goal each day is to ensure OSHA protects the safety and health of America’s workforce. Before, during, and after the pandemic, my goal is for OSHA’s efforts to prevent workers from ever becoming ill or injured because they are doing their job.”

“Where there are safety issues, OSHA remains, as always, shoulder to shoulder with America’s workers.”