

# AFL-CIO

## LEGISLATIVE ALERT

January 13, 2026

Dear Chairman Issa, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, a federation of 64 affiliate unions representing 15 million working people across our economy, in light of the upcoming January 14 subcommittee hearing on the stone slab industry, I urge you to oppose H.R.5437, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Stone Slab Products Act. This broad sweeping bill would shield manufacturers and sellers of all stone slabs from accountability for a dangerous product by granting them immunity against federal and state civil litigation when anyone—particularly workers—are injured or made ill from their products. This immunity would even apply to pending cases.

Stone slabs are designed to be fabricated into consumer products, namely countertops. Workers who fabricate (grind, cut, polish, finish) artificial (or “engineered”) and natural stone slab face well-documented, serious and incurable health risks from exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Occupational silica exposures have been linked to silicosis, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, kidney disease, and other debilitating and fatal illnesses. Many artificial stone countertop fabrication workers are immigrants and people of color who work in small shops with no control over the supply chain. Even in their 30s, many have died or have required lung transplants.

Artificial stone is an extremely dangerous product to workers due to its extraordinarily high silica content. Generated by powerful tools during the fabrication process, extra fine silica particles penetrate deep into the lungs causing faster, more intense disease (acute silicosis). Recommendations and regulations, such as OSHA’s silica standard on dust suppression and other control measures including the use of respirators have not effectively controlled these intense exposures or prevented disease and worker deaths. For example, in 2024 California OSHA adopted an emergency standard because it determined OSHA’s general silica rule was not sufficient for the extreme exposures in artificial stone countertop fabrication. Even after one year of enforcing the rule—including stronger engineering controls (wet cutting, wet polishing, local exhaust ventilation); expanded respirator use for high-exposure tasks; exposure monitoring for workers cutting, grinding, polishing, and drilling; and specific training on silica and safe work practices—significant exposures continue and the state is still considering more effective options, including legislation requiring safer stone products with lower silica content altogether.

Legal action is the only source of compensation for medical treatment and accountability to protect stone workers in the supply chain. Further, by limiting access to the courts, H.R. 5437 would remove a critical incentive for companies to invest in changing industry practices and safer products.

Instead of making workplaces safer, this bill would make it safer for dangerous workplaces to harm workers. We urge Congress to reject this attempt to remove accountability for dangerous products to workers and oppose H.R. 5437.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jody Calemine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jody" being more prominent and the last name "Calemine" following in a similar style.

Jody Calemine  
Director, Government Affairs