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Joint statement on the essential role of NIOSH for workers' health

The International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), the oldest scientific and professional association in the field of Occupational Safety and Health, together with the International Ergonomics and Human Factors Association (IEA) and the Collegium Ramazzini, all together representing their individual and collective members from over 100 Countries, deeply regret the decision to abruptly layoff two thirds of the employees, including leadership and research scientists, of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

NIOSH was established in 1970 with the Occupational Safety and Health Act to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for US workers by providing research, information, education and training in OSH.

Since its foundation, NIOSH has developed cutting-edge research and solutions to protect and promote workers' health and for the prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases, including through the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) that has stimulated research and has improved workplaces practices in multiple productive sectors and the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program that provides medical monitoring and treatment of WTC-related health conditions for 9/11 responders and survivors.

NIOSH activities have produced worldwide acknowledged and tangible results in many different fields, such as the dramatic reduction of casualties in the mining sector and of worker fatalities.

Top quality studies in the field of traditional, as well as new and emerging, occupational risk factors have driven the development of science, knowledge and practice at the global level in many different fields of OSH: from the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders with the NIOSH lifting equation and the Critical Review

of Epidemiologic Evidence for Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders of the Neck, Upper Extremity, and Low Back, to the development of global guidance and leadership in the field of nanomaterials and new technologies.

Last, but not least, the Total Worker Health concept has fostered a new, more inclusive and comprehensive approach to workers' health, with the progressive inclusion of health promotion, mental health protection and wellbeing concepts in the overall OSH framework.

In its role as one of the global leaders in the field of Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH is pivotal in many research programmes and projects and is part of many different international networks as an Institution as well as through the participation of its individual scientists.

ICOH, IEA and the Collegium Ramazzini express their great concern for the massive layoff of employees and the closing of the majority of NIOSH offices, infrastructures, programmes and services. The loss of one of the most important global players in the field of research and development of knowledge and best practices for the protection of health and safety in workplaces will lead to an impoverishment of the global OSH scientific community and will put at risk the health and safety of workers in the USA and beyond.