

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

Report of the CWA National Civil Rights & Equity Committee

President's Meeting
June 1, 2026

CWA National Civil Rights & Equity Committee

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Coded Language and Its Effect on Labor and Work Place Policies

Reginald Pierre-Louis, CWA Local 1106 and Monica Alvarado, CWA Local 9423

Since our last reporting in August 2025, we have seen an aggressive advance in tactics, policies, and initiatives by the current Trump administration. Within the past eight months, we have seen an increase in conflicts and confrontations throughout the United States with the proliferation of ICE agents in major metropolitan areas, which culminated in multiple assaults on citizens and two highly publicized deaths on the streets of Minneapolis. The new year has begun with large-scale military actions in the Caribbean Sea and Venezuela and now a seemingly protracted conflict in the Gulf and Iran.

The recently renamed Department of Defense, the Department of War, is living up to the aggressive moniker, with threats of increased action and possible expansion to other targets. While all this is taking place on the streets and across the globe, working-class people here at home are suffering with ever-increasing inflation, cuts to their healthcare, an unstable stock market, and a depressed job market.

The rights of the citizenry are under attack seemingly every day with legislation and protections, which have been long-standing, now being placed under constant scrutiny. The language of aggression isn't working for the average American citizen, only for the powerful and rich corporations and oligarchy. The "dog whistle," which we highlighted in our previous report, is quickly becoming a loudspeaker.

The corporate shaming, which began with the reversals of many DEI programs, pressured by the threat of more scrutiny, has only expanded to include many companies now examining their hiring practices to determine if there are any appearances of "reverse discrimination" as the political and legal atmosphere has corporate bosses in fear of reprisals.

According to Gravity Research, 40 companies have made significant DEI changes post inauguration, with 85% of those citing the changing political climate as the reason and 28% admitting to the Trump edicts as the cause. Many "blue chip stock" companies, including AT&T, Amazon, and Walmart, to name a few, have either shuttered DEI programs or severely altered them to comply with the ever-intensifying demand from the administration. Even some government agencies, which were founded to protect against discrimination, are being made to find or root out instances of perceived preferential treatment due to DEI practices.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recently did something unprecedented by asking a Wisconsin federal court to force Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. to share information about its diversity programs as part of the agency's

investigation into the company's alleged discrimination. The removal of anything deemed as honoring or in remembrance of members of underrepresented communities at national monuments, government facilities, or public spaces is becoming commonplace. Recently, the administration has had Pride flags taken down across the country. Of particular note was the removal of a Pride flag at the Stonewall National Monument in New York City, the first such national memorial dedicated to the LBGTQIA+ community. The use of government agencies, who are generally sworn to impartiality, now acting as unchecked enforcers of the executive branch, will have negative consequences for our nation going forward.

Despite the consistent attacks by the MAGA wing of the conservatives, we have seen just as much resolve on the part of the American people across all spectrums in challenging every obstacle being placed in the way, with labor leading the charge. We have seen numerous actions across the country over the past few months, from the denouncing of the ICE raids and subsequent deaths in Minneapolis to the NO KINGS rallies, which sprang up in major cities across the United States. There are also corporations who have not succumbed to the pressure and threats by the administration and continue to promote their DEI initiatives and have publicly stated so. Companies like Apple, Costco, Cisco, and Delta, to name a few.

Also, the administration, despite the narrative being put out by certain media outlets, has suffered some setbacks politically as well as in the courts, with some of the actions they have taken being overturned by court order or losses in some key races, which may be a sign of things to come in the upcoming midterm elections.

Here at CWA, we continue to promote legislation and candidates who not only are pro labor but also support the ideals and values that our union is based upon. With the dysfunction that the executive branch has fostered, our labor allies in the legislature have found themselves on defense attempting to counter all the attacks while continuing to push our legislative agenda forward. Bills that we have supported and pushed for remain in limbo as this administration continues to lead towards another seemingly never-ending war. The John R. Lewis Act, the Equality Act, and the Dream Act are chief amongst those that we have spent time and energy towards getting passed only to have them die on the vine or pushed to the back of the consciousness of our legislature.

In spite of all these challenges, CWA is well-positioned to continue its legacy of advocacy and resistance even during this tumultuous time. We have stood tall against many opponents over the course of many decades, with the fierce resolve and energy of our members; the leadership provided by our Legislative Political Action Committees and Human Rights Committees as well as the National Executive Board; and the support of

our allies in the community, labor, and political arenas. Continuing our outreach work through our Human Rights training and conferences, as well as participating with our constituency groups and partners, will further our aims in mobilizing our members and the citizenry at large about the potential for greater attacks and losses. We must not allow the “dog whistles” to become loud enough that our strong, dignified voices are drowned out and subsequently silenced to a dull murmur.

Sources and additional reading materials:

List of companies who rollback DEI.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2025/12/09/trump-dei-rollback-list-backlash/87457060007/>

Companies who stand by their DEI initiatives.

<https://abcnews.com/Business/companies-sticking-dei-amid-backlash/story?id=118037109>

Trump agrees to fly pride flag

<https://abcnews.com/US/trump-admin-agrees-fly-pride-flag-stonewall-national/story?id=131999377>

John R Lewis Voting Rights Act.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lewis_Voting_Rights_Act

Equality Act.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_Act_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_Act_(United_States))

Dream Act.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/365>

Wrongful Convictions: A Critical Issue Today

Civil Rights and Equity Committee, CWA National Human Rights

Our country locks up too many people for too long. Make no mistake: mass incarceration and the racial and economic disparities it drives continue to shape America for the worse. When innocent individuals are wrongfully convicted, they endure significant personal, emotional, and financial harm, and their families and communities also suffer, feeling the ripple effects of these injustices.

The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. While African Americans make up only 14% of the overall population, they represent 33% of the prison population. This incarceration crisis costs the families of incarcerated individuals nearly \$350 billion each year. Such costs deepen economic disparity, perpetuate the racial wealth gap, and exclude generations from achieving the American dream.

We are proud to partner with FWD.us, a grassroots organization that works alongside policymakers, business and community leaders, and advocates from diverse backgrounds to develop more effective and politically sustainable solutions for our criminal justice system. For over a decade, FWD.us has been at the forefront of advancing criminal justice reforms that have expanded freedom and opportunities for tens of millions of individuals across the United States.

During the 2025 holiday season, in partnership with FWD.us, we organized toy drives in CWA District 4, raising \$1,500. We used these donations to purchase toys, which were delivered to the WISDOM Office, where activists met with the founder and established a relationship with the organization. CWA Local 3511 collected toys for the RECH Foundation in Jackson, Miss. Members from the Local also helped assemble toys and gift bags for the children. CWA Local 3204 encouraged its members to bring a toy as an entry fee for its annual Christmas party in support of the RECH Foundation.

Through these toy drives, activists connected with organizations in their communities that assist justice-impacted families. For far too long, our flawed criminal justice system has hindered our progress and been manipulated in ways that compromise our nation's promise and democratic principles. In August at the 2026 Human Rights Conference, FWD.us's Vice President of External Affairs and Impact Elyssa Johnson will address activists on this crucial issue. We will also have a booth dedicated to educating activists on how to combat injustices within the criminal justice system. Activists will record messages to lawmakers on mass incarceration and the racial and economic disparities it drives. These messages will also serve as public service announcements on social media to educate the public.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials:

Grisham, John. *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*. Doubleday, 2006.

Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. Spiegel & Grau, 2014.

Scholarly articles and reports from the Innocence Project. National Registry of Exonerations. Innocence Network.

McGee, Noah A. "Wrongfully Accused: The Exoneration of Black People." *The Root*, December 31, 2021.

Spearman, Darius. "Devastating Reality: The Hidden Crisis of Wrongful Convictions." *African Elements*, May 20, 2024.

Ince, Selin. "Race and Exonerations: Why Black Defendants Are More Likely To Be Wrongfully Convicted." National Registry of Exonerations, October 13, 2022.

The Intersection of Poverty, Education, and Exploitation: Underserved Schools and Child Trafficking

Errol Minor, CWA Local 3902 and Kimberly Johnson, AFA-CWA Local 29011

Since the 2024 Human Rights Convention, there has been a focus on the critical issue of the intersection of poverty, education, and exploitation, specifically how disparities in underserved schools increase the vulnerability of children to trafficking.

We have taken intentional steps to move this work beyond conversation and into action. We have distributed child ID kits to CWA locals, engaged with family, friends, and members of the broader public, and brought this issue directly into our communities through voter registration drives and outreach events. We have also collaborated with constituency groups and CWA Women's Committees to raise awareness, educate communities, and begin building a network of advocates who understand both the urgency and importance of this issue. These kits are not just materials; they are tools that empower families and provide a level of protection for children who may otherwise be vulnerable.

Through this work, we have learned that the need is real and immediate. Communities are receptive, engaged, and grateful for the information and resources being shared. We've seen firsthand that, when given the tools and knowledge, people are ready to act to protect their children and strengthen their communities. At the same time, we recognize that while the response has been positive, the scope of the issue requires continued outreach, deeper engagement, and a sustained commitment to ensuring that no community is left behind. Moving forward, we will continue to identify the needs of locals by contacting Human Rights Committees in our districts and sending kits as requested.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials:

Rice University, Kinder Institute for Urban Research: Closing local achievement gaps begins with closing spending gaps in Houston, Harris County.

<https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/closing-achievement-gaps-houston>

Our Rescue: Human Trafficking Statistics and Facts in 2024.

<https://ourrescue.org/education/research-and-trends/human-trafficking-statistics>

National Child Identification Program.

<https://childidprogram.com>

Office on Trafficking in Persons.

<https://acf.gov/otip>

Homelessness in America: Addressing a Persistent Challenge

By Kwami Barnes, CWA Local 4603

In my 2025 CWA Convention report, I outlined the complicated yet pervasive problems of homelessness in America.

I am proud of the strides CWA has made over the past year to address the ever-growing plague of homelessness. CWA has continued to partner with organizations like the Poor People's Campaign, Forward.US, the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), and Supporting Impacted People (SIP) to uplift the unhoused and to support the efforts to combat homelessness.

CWA Districts have partnered with local labor councils and homeless shelters in collecting food for families, making over 300 sandwiches on behalf of organizations like the Guest House in Milwaukee, Wis., and Black Labor Week.

Additionally, we have partnered with churches and other faith-based organizations to help serve our unsheltered during the holiday season. We have held suitcase drives for foster families around the country, Christmas toy drives for numerous organizations, and educated our memberships through our local Human Rights Committees about the importance of community service and the support of the unhoused within our own communities.

During the fall of 2025, we held blanket drives, to include Health and Hygiene campaigns, and partnered with numerous state and workforce boards to push legislation for apprenticeships, jobs that pay prevailing wages, and healthcare.

On March 29, 2026, during the annual national CWA Human Rights Face-to-Face Meeting in Atlanta, Ga., the national Human Rights Committee partnered with members of AFL-CIO constituency groups and CWA Local 3204 to prepare over 100 food bags to pass out to Atlanta's unhoused community.

CWA and organized labor have led the fight for working together with community activists across the country because we understand that these are critical human rights issues that are inextricably linked to our collective civil rights work!

CWA continues to lead and carry the torch for dignity. When We Fight, We Win!

Let's continue our fight against homelessness in America. It is a challenge we can face and overcome together.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials:

National Alliance to End Homelessness: State of Homelessness: 2023 Edition.

<https://endhomelessness.org>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress.

<https://www.hud.gov>

National Low Income Housing Coalition: Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing.

<https://nlihc.org/oor>

Establishing Effective Human Rights Committees Through Collaboration and Constituency Groups

Reginald Small, CWA Local 6215

Since the 2025 Convention, the Communications Workers of America has aggressively pursued the directive to strengthen and build effective Human Rights Committees, focusing on establishing, training, and supporting this vital work across the nation. Recognizing that strong alliances with AFL-CIO constituency groups are essential for building collective power, we have successfully increased both membership and leadership capacity within these organizations.

CWA District 7 has demonstrated significant growth by helping to establish new Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) chapters. Similarly, CWA District 3 has advanced leadership positions within the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) chapters and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). CWA District 2-13 has seen a growth in leadership with several chapters of the CBTU, APRI, and CLUW. CWA District 6 has increased membership and leadership within the APRI and CBTU. CWA District 4 has continued to maintain and expand leadership and membership within constituency groups and with the CWA Minority Caucus. The Public Sector in CWA District 7 has increased its leadership role in Pride at Work, while CWA District 1 has displayed greater participation and leadership in the CBTU. CWA District 9 maintains one of our strongest chapters of the CBTU, continuing a tradition of robust human rights advocacy. AFA-CWA, in collaboration with Pride at Work, has been very intentional in making a difference in the lives of everyday workers.

Beyond individual district efforts, national and regional collaborations remain a staple of our strategy. We continue to collaborate with the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement in planning for our upcoming Human Rights Conference in 2026.

Demonstrating our commitment to internal leadership, CWA Chief of Staff Sylvia J. Ramos was recently elected president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, cementing a strategic partnership. CWA members are deeply embedded as members and leaders within the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance and the Union Veterans Council, creating a stronghold for sustaining human rights work.

These efforts have been further amplified by our March 2026 CWA Human Rights Face to Face Meeting in Atlanta, where we utilized specialized training to empower our leaders. By embedding our human rights initiatives within community-based organizations and constituency groups, we are not only expanding our network but actively organizing for a more equitable future.

Unnecessary Force on Defenseless Civilians

Vonda Wilkins, CWA Local 7019 and Antwan Marshall, IUE-CWA Local 81266

"You were put here to protect us. But who protects us from you?" KRS-One

Over the last several months, leading the 'Eric's ID Law' call-to-action activities has outlined our shared commitment to human rights justice.

As we've built a coalition from state to state, we've felt a combination of urgency and hope by listening to the stories shared by families, organizations, and legislators who expressed concerns for their loved ones' safety, as well as seeing the incredible momentum of a rapidly growing movement. Witnessing the 'butterfly logo' go live in Maryland and seeing Eric receive national recognition wasn't just an advocacy milestone for us; it was a deeply personal affirmation that when we organize, we save lives.

We are proud of the progress we've made with representatives and senators from the East to the West Coast. We carry the responsibility of this report with pride, knowing we're building a future where unnecessary force on defenseless civilians is replaced by understanding, accountability, and equity.

With that, we'd like to walk you through the specific actions and milestones from this past year.

Chronological Timeline & Action Items (2025 – Present)

● July 2025:

- We participated in a podcast show with Ms. Linda & Eric.

Topics: Spectrum Family Talks "Parent Chats" with host Arlene Chandler speaking with parents worldwide about Eric's ID Law.

- Ms. Linda & Eric appeared on the KYOK Radio Show to discuss Eric's ID Law and hidden disabilities.

● August 2025:

- We met with families and organizations in Indiana, Massachusetts, and Georgia to start the groundwork in building a coalition to identify a legislative sponsor for Eric's ID Law bill.

- September 2025:

- We initiated California legislative research with D9 lobbyists to analyze why previous disability identifier bills (e.g., AB 971 and SB 1285) stalled in the Appropriations Committee.
- Coordinated with California activists, non-profit organizations, CWA District 9 former Human Rights representatives Esthela Hernandez and Sheila Bordeaux, and the D9 LPAT department to plan the revival of these efforts for the February 2026 or 2027 session.
- We met with families and organizations in Indiana, Massachusetts, and Georgia to build a coalition to identify a legislator sponsor for Eric's ID Law bill.

- October 2025:

- We celebrated a major milestone in Maryland as Eric's ID Law went live, with Governor Wes Moore signing the bill into law on October 1. Eric was the first to receive the ID with the butterfly logo. As of March 2026, over 14k Marylanders have sought the butterfly logo on their IDs.
- We had a follow-up meeting with families and organizations in Indiana, Massachusetts, California, and Georgia to continue coalition-building efforts to identify a legislative sponsor for Eric's ID Law bill.

- November 2025:

- We held strategy meetings for Georgia, Indiana, Alabama, and Massachusetts. The meeting included senators and representatives who agreed to sponsor the bill.
- We coordinated with CWA D9 lobbyist Ignacio Hernandez to review California's fiscal barriers to DMV technology updates and to review Maryland's bill.

- December 2025:

- We collaborated to enhance California's "Blue Envelope" initiative, aligning it with Eric's ID Law template to make it more cost-effective for legislators, and began drafting the bill.

- Strategy meetings continued with community advocates and families from Georgia, Indiana, Alabama, and Massachusetts.

- January 2026:

- We met with Civil Rights & Equity member Errol Minor to discuss national movement-building and collaborative legislative outreach on a broader platform, working on which states to present the bill in 2027.

- Alabama: We worked with Errol to draft the bill to present to Representative Ontario Tillman.

- Errol Minor drafted a “bill template” for us to replicate in other states as we introduce the bill to legislators.

- New York: We are working with Senator Robert Jackson and committee members Teesha, RPL, and Liz to present the bill in 2026-2027.

- Delaware: Press Conference held and bill filed on January 20, 2026.

- We attended the 35th National Action Network MLK Breakfast, hosted by Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III, on January 19 in D.C., to witness them present Eric with the Youth Award for Eric’s ID Law.

- February 2026

- Connecticut: We met with Representative Minnie Gonzalez, Representative Darrell Wilson, and Representative Treneé McGee, and all agreed to sponsor Eric’s ID Law bill.

- North Carolina: We met with CWA advocates Timmia Wiley, Mikeya Jones, Yvonne Newton, and Grant Welch to introduce Eric’s ID Law petition and begin grassroots work in the state's communities.

Elected Representatives Sponsors & Misc:

- Connecticut: Representative Minnie Gonzalez, Representative Darrell Wilson, and Representative Treneé McGee.

- Alabama: Representative Ontario Tillman.

- California: Senator John Laird and Assembly Member Blanca Pacheco.
- Georgia: Senator Donzella James and House Representative Eric Bell.
- New York: Senator Robert Jackson.
- Timmia Wiley: CWA Human Rights Department participating on Zoom calls as a support system.
- Ignacio Hernandez: CWA District 9 Lobbyist.
- Errol Minor: Lead on Alabama state-wide strategy and draft bill templates to replicate across other states.

Other Human Rights/Community Partners:

- Linda Carpenter-Grantham and Eric: Key testifiers and founders of the initiative.
- Lisa Haynes, General VP, Washington Teachers Union: Coalition building to present Eric's ID law to the Special Olympics director and the Obama Outreach Foundation.
- Georgette Cicero: Legislative contact for the Black and Puerto Rican Caucuses for the state of Connecticut.
- Silvette Bullard: Outreach lead for sororities/fraternities and digital presence in Georgia.
- Approximately 25 families across the states were identified in the coalition-building efforts of Eric's ID Law.

Successes, Ongoing Actions, and Press Conferences:

- Maryland: A press conference was held on October 1st, and the law took effect that same day.
- Delaware: A press conference was held and a bill filed on January 20, 2026
- Georgia: A press conference was held with Senator Donzella James on January 28, and the bill was presented on the State Capitol floor.
- New York (pending for 2026-2027): We are currently working on a date for a press conference.

- Connecticut: Representative Minnie Gonzalez, Representative Darrell Wilson, and Representative Treneé McGee all agreed to sponsor Eric's ID Law bill, aiming for its presentation in January 2027.
- Alabama: Aiming to present the bill in February 2027.
- Massachusetts and Indiana: Continue coalition building while identifying legislators to sponsor the bill.
- California: Continue working with CWA District 9 LPAT team, aiming for the bill's presentation by the end of 2026.
- Petitions: National expansion throughout targeted states to gather digital signatures as an additional advocacy tool to support the enactment of Eric's ID Law.
- Ongoing Advocacy Training: Through consistent Zoom coordination, we continue to build our advocates' skills in community outreach and petition growth while providing them with a framework for effectively contacting and meeting with their local representatives.
- Attended the Blue Runway for Autism Fashion Show event hosted by Ms. Linda and Eric on April 11 to speak with attendees about the progress of enacting Eric's ID Law in many states. Tim Fitzgerald, our CRE brother, and former CRE sister Nikki Robinson were there as well to show their support.
- 2026 Human Rights Conference: Eric's ID Law table at the Interactive Activist Mall to highlight the work CWA, Ms. Linda, Eric, and the community have been doing to get the law enacted in many states
- The newest focus: Adding Illinois, Florida, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, D.C., and Ohio to efforts to introduce Eric's ID Law in those states.

In closing, the timeline and progress represent a coordinated effort to ensure that no person, regardless of their disability or background, is ever subjected to unnecessary force due to a lack of understanding.

We will continue to expand our advocacy outreach, draft legislation, and build coalitions until Eric's ID Law is the standard across every state in this country.

Antwan and I want to thank the Human Rights Department for its support and the Joint Human Rights Committee for joining and assisting in the states within your district; you all have been so impactful, and your support has been endless. Together, we are not just passing laws; we are changing the culture of safety and protecting the lives and dignity of the hidden disability community. Thank you.

Sources and Additional Reading Materials:

U.S. Department of Justice: Justice Department Finds Civil Rights Violations by Phoenix Police Department and City of Phoenix.

<https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-finds-civil-rights-violations-phoenix-police-department-and-city-phoenix>

American Progress: Understanding the Policing of Black, Disabled Bodies.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/understanding-policing-black-disabled-bodies/>

University of Illinois Chicago Law Enforcement Epidemiology Project: U.S. Data on Police Shootings and Violence.

<https://policeepi.uic.edu/u-s-data-on-police-shootings-and-violence/>

CNN: Bodycam Video Shows Phoenix Police Punching and Tasing a Deaf Man on the Ground.

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/16/us/phoenix-police-tyron-mcalpin-bodycam/index.html>

Striking Down Mental Health Stigma

Tim Fitzgerald, TNG-CWA Local 32035 and Teesha Foreman, PHEW-CWA Local 1180

“What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation.” —Glenn Close

Mental health has become an increasingly urgent issue in the modern workplace over the past year, particularly in industries represented by the Communications Workers of America (CWA), including telecommunications, media, customer service, and the public sector. Workers in these sectors often face high stress, long hours, emotional labor, and job insecurity—all of which can significantly impact mental well-being.

Despite growing awareness, stigma surrounding mental health remains a major barrier preventing workers from seeking support. From a union perspective, this stigma is not just a personal issue but a collective labor issue, affecting workplace safety, productivity, and equity. CWA, with its long history of advocating for workers’ rights, is well-positioned to lead efforts to eliminate mental health stigma through collective action, education, and policy advocacy.

Mental health stigma undermines workers’ rights by discouraging individuals from accessing care, reporting unsafe conditions, or using negotiated benefits such as leave and counseling services. In New York City, 14% of adults report unmet mental health needs, often due to stigma, cost, or lack of awareness.

For CWA members, especially call center workers, journalists, telecommunications workers, and public sector employees, mental health challenges are compounded by high-pressure performance metrics, exposure to verbal abuse from customers or audiences, irregular or long working hours, and rapid technological and industry changes. Addressing stigma is therefore essential to ensuring safe, fair, and dignified workplaces. Since our CWA convention in 2025, CWA locals have been intentional about normalizing mental health discussions by incorporating them into union meetings, training, and communication.

CWA Local 1180 has gained a seat on the board of Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health, and we are actively working to reduce mental health stigmas. Since the National Convention we have met with the board regarding mental health workshops, educational pamphlets, and health fairs to educate our members.

CWA Locals have volunteered and walked with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) annually. NAMI is the largest grassroots mental health organization in the United States. It focuses on providing advocacy, education, support, and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives. Members of CWA Local 1180 are scheduled to participate in the upcoming NAMI walk on Sunday, May

17, 2026, in New York City. Additionally, the CWA National Human Rights Committee is working on our newest training workshop, “The Whole Worker – Reclaiming Your Humanity and Well-Being in an AI-Driven World,” which we plan to roll out at our Human Rights Conference.

On the legislative front in New York, a major step forward for workers’ rights came when Governor Kathy Hochul signed new legislation (S.6635/A.5745), which expanded their state workers’ compensation program to include benefits for mental health injuries. Previously, workers’ compensation covered physical injuries, and mental health claims were limited mostly to first responders. But now, all workers in New York can file claims for conditions like PTSD, depression, or severe stress—if those conditions are caused by their job. This law is significant because it officially recognizes mental health as a workplace issue—not just a personal issue. And if it is job-related, it is a union issue. We won’t stop there; we plan to continue to play a transformative role in reframing mental health by integrating it into organizing, bargaining, and advocacy efforts in order to reduce stigma across industries, empower members to seek care without fear, hold employers accountable for providing adequate support, and strengthen solidarity by addressing shared challenges.

Mental health advocacy aligns directly with the union’s mission to improve working conditions and protect worker dignity.

Striking down mental health stigma requires more than awareness. It demands action!

For CWA, this means using its full range of tools, from bargaining to political advocacy, to ensure that mental health is treated with the same urgency and respect as physical health.

By leading these efforts, CWA will help create workplaces where all workers feel supported, protected, and empowered to prioritize their well-being without fear of judgment or discrimination.

“There is no health without mental health.” –World Health Organization

Sources and Additional Reading Materials:

1 New Report Reveals Barriers to Mental Health Treatment for Nearly One Million New York City Adults.

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2025/report-reveals-mh-treatment-barriers-for-nearly-one-million.page>