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March 8, 2004

The Honorable Sila Maria Calderon
Office of the Governor
LaForteleza, San Juan, PR 00901

**AIHA RECOMMENDS VETO OF HR 2405 – CERTIFICATION OF SAFETY
PROFESSIONALS AND INDUSTRIAL HYGIENISTS**

Dear Governor Calderon:

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) respectfully urges you to veto HR 2405, legislation that would require establishment of a program to certify safety professionals and industrial hygienists in Puerto Rico.

AIHA shares the concern of everyone in the Puerto Rico House of Representatives, Senate and the Department of Labor and Human Resources for the health and safety of workers and others in Puerto Rico. AIHA members work every day to achieve the goal that workers return home safe and healthy each and every day. In this respect, the goal of HR Bill 2405 is commendable.

However, we believe the means of achieving this goal by establishing a government certification program is wrong in its approach. Notwithstanding the reasons expressed by others for opposing this legislation, AIHA would like to address a few additional issues that must be considered.

The industrial hygiene profession already has its own nationally accredited certification program, operated by the independent American Board of Industrial Hygiene (ABIH). The qualifications to become a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) are very stringent and involve minimal educational requirements, experience requirements, successful passage of a complex examination, and continuing education requirements in order to maintain the certifications. The safety profession has a similar activity administered by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals.

AIHA

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The CIH and the Certified Safety Professional (CSP) are recognized in numerous United States regulations and standards as qualified and competent to work in recognizing, evaluating and controlling occupational safety and health hazards found in the workplace. In addition to U.S. federal regulations and standards, there are considerable state and local laws, regulations, and standards that also recognize the CIH and CSP as a competent and qualified occupational safety and health professional.

These States, as well as the U.S. Federal Government, determined that such qualifications and certifications should be left to the private sector, so long as the certification programs are accredited. The States and Federal government decided long ago that this certification should not be the responsibility of the government; that the responsibility of government is to assure that the public health and safety of the citizens is protected. State and federal governments realize the current process is working well with adequate government oversight, yet with minimal government interference.

AIHA believes that HR Bill 2405 is the wrong approach to addressing occupational health and safety in Puerto Rico. We agree with others that:

- Thus far there is no definitive need for the legislation,
- Professional occupational health and safety associations in Puerto Rico were opposed to this legislation two years ago and were not consulted during this most recent debate,
- The Department of Labor and Human Resources is the wrong agency to be involved in any credentialing program; and
- Providing a “grandfather clause” will allow unqualified individuals to practice safety and health. Under this clause, almost anyone will be able to claim they have the experience and qualifications to become a Certified Industrial Hygienist or an Occupational Safety Professional.

Founded in 1939, the American Industrial Hygiene Association is the premier association of occupational and environmental health and safety professionals. AIHA’s 12,000 members play a crucial role on the front line of worker health and safety everyday. Members represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, academia, and government. I am pleased that Puerto Rico is home to one of our local sections.

In conclusion, AIHA again expresses our opposition to HR Bill 2405 and urges you to veto this legislation. We also ask that the professional occupational health and safety associations, AIHA and ASSE, as well as others, be consulted to discuss what, if any, additional approach is necessary to protect workers in Puerto Rico.

AIHA thanks you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

(signature)

Thomas G Grumbles

Thomas G. Grumbles, CIH
President

cc: AIHA Board of Directors
Puerto Rico AIHA Local Section
Steven Davis, AIHA Executive Director
Aaron Trippler, AIHA Director Government Affairs