

My name is Megan Lowell, I am a resident of the Town of Windham as well as a Nurse Manager at Maine Medical Center in Portland. I have worked as a nurse at MMC for the past 11 years in various care settings, the latest as the Nurse Manager of the Cardiac Catherization Laboratory (a procedure area that cares for heart attack patients). I have also served our country as a 1LT in the US Army Nurse Corps Reserves out of Auburn.

I am writing to you today in regard to my concern over a bill that will be presented to the Labor and Housing committee (LD1639) next Thursday. This bill has been brought forth in response to the labor shortage that nursing is facing in state, and is very prescriptive of mandatory nurse to patient ratios. Should this bill come to a vote, I urge you to vote no in opposition to this bill. Plainly, this bill strips nurses of autonomy and flexibility, does NOT create new nurses, does not improve quality of care and most importantly reduces access to care in our very rural state where access to care is already challenging. In short, this would create a great risk to patient safety by exacerbating the already prevalent problem of bed closures and delays in patient care.

As a nurse leader in a high stress, high volume procedural area, we already adhere to the ratio that would be required in my area due to the nature of the care we provide. I do not disagree that nurse to patient ratios need to be managed; however this bill does not take into account the acuity (severity of a hospitalized patient's illness) of each patient, it simply looks at the ratio. In nursing, we use our clinical expertise and assessment to determine the level of care needed for each patient which allows us to fluctuate our level of care throughout each shift. This bill attempts to give a one size fits all approach to nursing care which is neither a realistic nor an achievable goal.

Maine was just voted by The Leapfrog Group (a national quality and safety organization) the first ever state of the decade for patient safety. This is due to our consistently high scores in patient safety and quality across the entire state's health care systems. California is the *only* state in the country who has legislated mandated nurse to patient ratios. This same group ranked California hospitals 25th in patient safety and quality. This is just one example that negates the argument that mandated ratios provide greater quality of care.

Nursing resources are scarce as it is and the projections for 2025 show a shortage of 2,250 nurses in our state alone (per the Cypress Research Group). As a rural state, we already have challenges with access to health care. These ratios, coupled with our workforce shortage, will force bed closures or a \$10,000 fine per shift when the ratios are not met. I am concerned that with bed closures, delays in patient care will occur as well as the potential to close smaller critical access hospitals who cannot pay the fines or find nurses to staff the beds. The access to health care in our state is already reaching a critical point and this bill perpetuates and will potentially accelerate this problem.

In closing, it is not out of concern for my specific area that I write, it is the concern I have for our patients' access to care. I urge you to vote no.

Respectfully,

Megan Lowell, RN, BSN