



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

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Mr. David Seltz
Executive Director
Health Policy Commission
50 Milk Street, 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02109

Dear Director Seltz:

Thank you for the opportunity to present comments in support of Ballot Question No. 1. Setting a safe maximum limit on the number of patients assigned to a nurse at one time, while providing the flexibility to adjust nurses' patient assignments based on specific patient needs, will improve patient healthcare outcomes and patient safety in Massachusetts' hospitals. When nurses are spread too thin, patient care suffers and bad things can happen.

Today in Massachusetts hospitals, only Intensive Care Units have nurse staffing requirements. In the absence of a more comprehensive law limiting the number of patients that can be assigned to a nurse at one time, patient care is deteriorating and leading to more complications, preventable readmissions, and medical errors, as well as longer hospital stays and real life-threatening risks.

Nurses say patient care is being compromised when they are assigned too many patients. Seventy-seven percent of registered nurses report that they are assigned too many patients to care for at one time. Dozens of independent scientific studies have consistently found that the quality of care decreases dramatically when nurses are forced to care for too many patients at once, putting patients at increased risk for complications like pneumonia, bedsores, infections and more. Evidence-based, peer-reviewed studies published in respected medical journals such as the *Journal of Institute of Medicine*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine* have all published studies on the impact of the nurses' patient assignments impacting the quality of care.

Massachusetts is well-positioned to have safe patient limits. Hospitals can afford to invest in better patient care. This is a \$28 billion hospital industry that recorded \$7.6 billion in profits in the last five years. Massachusetts has more nurses per capita than nearly every other state in the

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nation. We are one of just two states with no nursing shortage and a projected surplus though the year 2030.

Ballot Question 1 is supported by a broad coalition from across Massachusetts, including registered nurses, patients and family members, health and safety organizations, community groups, unions and elected officials.

Safe patient limits ensure better patient outcomes, lower healthcare costs and higher quality of care. Nursing is a time-honored profession that touches each and every life in Massachusetts. In a time when we are wrangling with dramatic healthcare costs, investing in nurse staffing and elevating the nursing profession will dramatically increase positive patient outcomes and lead to cost reductions in the short and long term.

We spare no expense for the latest technology, or the greatest medical specialist. It is high time we invest in the people who provide the tertiary care that is so critical to positive hospital admissions. The good people of Massachusetts deserve no less.

Nurses in Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, North Scituate, and across the Commonwealth, are highly trained professionals who have proven themselves to be truly dedicated to their work. We should ensure that the hospitals across the Commonwealth invest in the nursing profession, and empower nurses to provide the highest quality of patient care.

For these reasons, I urge you to recommend a positive vote in support Ballot Question No. 1.

Very truly yours,



Joan Meschino
State Representative
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