



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

**SENATOR MARC R. PACHECO**  
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JOINT COMMITTEES:  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
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EXPORT DEVELOPMENT  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES AND ENERGY

SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION

### Health Policy Commission October 16 & 17, 2018 Yes on Question 1

I am supporting Question 1 because of the urgent need for improvements in patient safety in Massachusetts hospitals. By setting a safe maximum limit on the number of patients assigned to a nurse at one time, combined with the flexibility necessary to adjust nurse's assignments based on the needs of patients, we can avoid the suffering and danger that can take place when nurses are spread too thin.

There is currently no law or limitation on the number of patients that can be assigned to nurses in Massachusetts hospitals, except for the Intensive Care Unit. This is leading directly to a deterioration of patient care, increasing complications, creating preventable readmissions, medical errors, life-threatening risks, and prolonged hospital stays, all of which lead to increased insurance costs for consumers.

77% of RNs report that they are assigned too many patients to care for at one time, compromising their ability to provide patient care. Dozens of independent scientific studies release consistent findings showing a decrease in quality of care when nurses are forced to care for too many patients at once. This puts vulnerable patients at risk for complications like pneumonia, bedsores, infections, and more.

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 published evidence-based, peer-reviewed studies on the impact of nurses' patient assignments impacting the quality of care.

As a state, Massachusetts is well-positioned to have safe patient limits. Hospitals can, and should afford to invest in better patient care. The \$28 billion hospital industry, which recorded \$7.6 billion in profits in the last five years, can absorb such limits. We have more nurses per capita than nearly every state in the nation, and we are one of just two states in the country with

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no nursing shortage. Massachusetts has a projected surplus of nurses through 2030, and is well-positioned to support the enactment of safe patient limits.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc R. Pacheco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marc" being the most prominent.

Marc R. Pacheco  
President Pro Tempore  
Massachusetts State Senate