

February 19, 2022

Dear Senators,

I am a nurse at Unity Hospital in Fridley where I have worked on the cardiac floor for 10 years. I also have been a clinical nursing instructor for Anoka Ramsey Community College and St. Catherine's University. I write today to urge you to reject the Nurse Licensure Compact. It's a bad idea and it strikes me as a ploy by the hospital managers to cover up their role in the ongoing staffing crisis.

During the Covid surges the work for us nurses was nothing short of a nightmare. We drowned in impossible patient assignments that forced us to make the most difficult decisions on where to spend our time: the Covid patient gasping for air in their last hours of life, the incontinent patient unattended, or the family of the patient with dementia who keeps calling seeking a phone update because they can't come to the hospital because of visitor restrictions. At the end of each shift, you went home exhausted physically and emotionally wondering if you could have done more as the memories of the suffering you witnessed stay in your head too long.

Our staffing situation was terrible before Covid. But the pandemic made it worst, and it put a huge public spotlight on it. Hospital executives know they must show the public they are doing something. Pushing the Nursing Compact is a cynical ploy. Please don't fall for it.

Will a few dozen nurses from Tennessee help Minnesota's staffing crisis? No. Minnesota right now has more RNs than at any other time. But hospitals are losing nurses because nurses don't want to work with the inadequate staffing levels that puts our patients' safety and our nursing licenses at risk. The compact may offer a talking point about addressing staffing problems. But it's a lie. It won't fix the issue.

Solving our current staffing crisis is a priority for the Minnesota Nurses Association. We have proposals that can bring real change inside our health care system that keeps patients safe and nurses at the bedside. We invite lawmakers of all parties to help us work together to find that solution.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Welsh, RN
St. Paul, MN