

3/7/2023

Senator Wiklund, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate Building

Dear Chair Wiklund and committee members,

My name is Chris Rubesch, and I am a cardiac nurse and 1st vice president of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Thank you for hearing SF1561 Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act.

As you likely know, during our recent statewide contract negotiations, staffing was the central sticking point between workers and management. Nurses sought not only a greater voice in staffing and scheduling decisions but accountability from our health care systems when those staffing levels are not met. Time and time again our employers told us that they would never put that sort of staffing language in our contracts, and they would have to be directed by the legislature to do so. We have done all we can through negotiations.

In the medical field we are taught to use C-U-S words as a way to express safety concerns, explain why the situation is unsafe, and stop the situation quickly. So let me tell you plainly that I am concerned about the staffing levels we currently have in our medical facilities and the exodus of staff leaving the profession. This situation is unsafe for health care workers and patients and is going to get significantly worse with the impending retirement of an entire generation of workers, we have to stop this and you must intervene now.

I could tell you story after story of unsafe patient care situations, patient falls or developing bedsores, treatment delays and other gut-wrenching stories. But we have been coming to you for over a decade with these stories with no effect. We have detailed our increasing concern for safe staffing reports to no avail. We have shared them with our hospital leadership and been scoffed at, laughed at, and dismissed. We have been gaslit by hospital and state leaders who keep passing the buck.

That is why the Minnesota Nurses Association has worked with other health care disciplines and front-line workers for more than two years to help craft the keeping nurses at the bedside act. This bill would truly be an innovative Minnesota solution to a nationwide problem and once again place our state at the forefront of health care delivery. The bill would increase incentives for people to go into the nursing profession and set up interdisciplinary committees that would create facility specific staffing metrics. And most importantly bring accountability when staffing levels are not met.

Now I'm sure you will hear from our states hospitals that this bill will reduce hospital bed capacity. But this is a red herring argument to distract from the truth: our states hospital bed capacity is ALREADY reduced due to staff leaving the profession in droves. This legislation will help stop the bleeding and return patients to the center of our health care.

Please join us in standing up for our patients and return Minnesota to being a national leader in health care.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Chris Rubesch