

3/7/2023

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

Dear Chair Wiklund and committee members,

I am a registered nurse who has worked at M Health Fairview Southdale hospital for the last 10 years. At Southdale, we have a broken process in place called a grid review to deal with how our units are staffed. Every year, we meet with the nursing staff of a unit and the hospital management. During this meeting, nurses plead their case on behalf of their unit to maintain the level of staff we have or to increase it where possible. Throughout the 10 years I have been attending these meetings, management has consistently cut our staff and tried to increase the number of patients we take care of. Nurses can voice their concerns, but management does not seem to listen. Rather, they continue to reduce staffing, increase patient assignment loads, and force nurses to have to figure out how to provide the care our patients need and deserve though management did not listen to our pleas for appropriate staffing numbers. I see the impact of these changes every day as we do not have the resources, we need to provide safe patient care. This leads to us feeling like we are failing at our duty as nurses which causes moral injury and impacts our mental health.

A shift I worked recently in the hospital staffing was unable to provide our unit with a nurse, a tech to watch our cardiac monitors and a unit secretary. Most nurses on the unit had to take care of an additional patient as well as pitching in to do the work of the ancillary staff who weren't there. When they found a nurse to come help, they quickly realized that she had never been trained on the cardiac unit and couldn't help with our more critical care patients. We had to organize an assignment that was appropriate for her medical background. Trying to ensure every patient had safe and high-quality care when being stretched so thin was maddening and I was so anxious that I was going to miss something important. Operating at this level of stress is absolutely unmanageable and the reason why people are leaving bedside nursing.

Patients and healthcare workers need your intervention to ensure that nurses have a voice in patient care and that management must listen. The conditions in my hospital are unsustainable and will only continue to deteriorate if you do not step in and pass SF 1561, the Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tess Schlickup