

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
One strong united voice for Minnesota workers

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Honorable Members of the Minnesota Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

AFSCME Council 5 strongly supports S.F.4444, S.F.4382, and S.F.4064. The consolidation of hospitals under large corporations has focused more attention on profits and the bottom line than on patients and the critical staff at their bedside. These bills work to re-focus the attention on patient care and the staff critical to delivering that care. These bills collectively address several threats posed to the quality of health care Minnesotans expect and deserve.

S.F.4444 addresses the need for greater transparency and the need to protect health care workers from retaliation when they raise concerns and speak out or take action to protect safe patient care. Nurses spend more time at the bedside than anyone else and their voices are critically important to ensuring problems affecting patient health care are addressed.

S.F. 4382 requires more prior notification along with hearings for hospital closures or curtailment of services. Such closures or curtailment of services have a devastating impact on the communities they serve and the ability of citizens to access health care. Citizens need to have the opportunity to respond and be heard before such consequential decisions are made and implemented. The bill also includes a right of first refusal requirement when a hospital or hospital campus are put up for sale to give a chance for communities to retain the health care access they need.

S.F. 4064 establishes a hospital health crisis team and strengthens provisions preventing violence at health care facilities. Today, health care workers are overworked, and hospitals are understaffed, which increases the risk of violence. This increased workload and risk of violence exacerbates the problem of recruiting and retaining badly needed direct care staff. Health care workers leaving direct care worsens the understaffing problem and intensifies the downward spiral in the quality of care for Minnesota citizens. This bill also requires disclosure of emergency department wait times so the public becomes aware of the negative results from understaffing and the need to stop the downward spiral.

It is time to stop the decline and re-focus our attention on the quality of patient care instead of the size of corporate profits. Minnesota AFSCME Council 5 stands in solidarity with Minnesota Nurses and all workers delivering direct patient care.

In Solidarity,

Bart Andersen

Bart Andersen, Interim Executive Director

Ethan Vogel

Ethan Vogel, Legislative Director