

March 11, 2024

Senator Melissa Wiklund
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2107
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: SF4444 (Port) – allowing for refusal of patient assignment

Dear Chair Wiklund and committee members,

On behalf of Allina Health, I am writing to express our concerns regarding the potential impacts of SF4444, which allows registered nurses to refuse a patient assignment.

Allina Health is a fully integrated health system with 11 hospital campuses, 65 primary care clinics, and 14 urgent care centers across the Twin Cities, central and southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. We are also proud to operate more than 100 specialty care sites including retail pharmacy, emergency medical services, same-day surgery centers, virtual care, and expert specialty care for cancer, heart, orthopedics, rehabilitation and more. We are dedicated to serving our communities by providing exceptional care, as we prevent illness, restore health and provide comfort to all who entrust us with their care.

Currently, Allina Health hospitals have a process in place as agreed to as part of our Collective Bargaining Agreements for nurses to elevate staffing assignment concerns. This includes the nurse elevating the concern to the nursing leader who will then determine whether the assignment presents an unsafe staffing assignment and will determine the best way to proceed. SF4444, which is language carried over from last session's problematic "Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act," would allow an individual nurse on any unit throughout the hospital to refuse a patient assignment. This raises significant concerns regarding the potential for inequitable health care delivery. Currently, all hospitals have a reporting process for nurses that have concerns regarding taking a patient assignment. This bill would supersede our current process, eliminating input from nursing leaders and other care team members. This will make it challenging to plan and flex to meet patient demand. Allowing nurses to refuse patient assignments will inevitably lead to unit closures and delays in care. These unit closures will lead to additional backups in the emergency departments.

Overall, this bill represents a real threat to patient care. The current process for a nurse to elevate staffing assignment concerns works and accounts for the best interest of the entire care team and the patient as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of our patients, providers, and communities.

Sincerely,



Dr. D'Andre Carpenter
SVP, Chief Nursing Executive
Allina Health