

Minnesota Senate
Senate Labor Committee
95 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55103

Dear Chair McEwen and Members of the Senate Labor Committee,

My name is Anna, and I have been a registered nurse for several years. I entered this profession to provide compassionate care, but unsafe staffing ratios have made working conditions unbearable, leading to injuries, burnout, and nurses leaving the field.

Like many of my colleagues, I have been placed in situations where I was expected to do the work of multiple people. My hospital routinely assigns nurses to care for six patients overnight and forces “helping hands” nurses to perform both nursing and nursing assistant duties for up to 30 patients without adequate support. This level of understaffing creates an unsustainable workload and puts nurses at significant risk of physical injury.

Five months ago, while working as a “helping hands” nurse, I suffered a severe back injury while attempting to reposition a 300-pound patient without proper lifting equipment or additional staff. The unit was so short-staffed that I had no choice but to continue working through exhaustion, lifting and moving patients on my own. That night ended my ability to work at the bedside, and I am still unable to bend, sit, or stand for extended periods. My career as a bedside nurse may be over.

Stories like mine are becoming all too common. Nurses are expected to perform impossible tasks under impossible conditions, leading to career-ending injuries and emotional exhaustion. The moral injury of knowing we cannot provide the care our patients need is pushing experienced nurses out of the workforce. Many, like me, are forced to leave due to injuries, while others walk away because they can no longer endure the emotional and physical toll. Without action, these working conditions will continue to drive nurses out of the profession, worsening the staffing crisis and making recruitment and retention even more difficult.

I urge you to support policies that enforce safe staffing ratios to protect the nurses who remain, prevent unnecessary injuries, and ensure hospitals can recruit and retain skilled professionals.

Sincerely,

Anna Rabe, RN
Little Canada, MN