

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

Dear Chair McEwen and Members of the Senate Labor Committee,

I love being a nurse, but I retired three years earlier than planned due to unsafe staffing, lack of workplace protections, and the ongoing disregard of nurses and their training and professional experience by hospital administration. The manufactured nursing shortage during the pandemic only made these conditions worse, and many of us have reached a breaking point. Nurses can no longer sustain the physical and emotional toll of short staffing, which has led to widespread burnout, moral injury, and an exodus from bedside care.

We entered this profession to provide care at the highest ethical and professional standards, but hospital leadership prioritizes cost-cutting over safe staffing. The growing disconnect between what we were trained to do and what we are forced to do is crushing. The expectation to "do more with less" means we routinely sacrifice our own well-being—skipping meals, delaying bathroom breaks, and working through exhaustion. Charting happens off the clock, essential patient care is rushed, and critical assessments are compromised. Nurses leave every shift burdened with what they didn't have time to do, fearing they may have missed something that could lead to a preventable crisis.

This is not a nursing shortage, it is a deliberate choice by hospital leadership to understaff units, overload nurses with non-nursing tasks, and ignore the growing mental and physical toll on their workforce. As a result, thousands of experienced nurses have walked away, not because they don't love the work, but because they can no longer endure the conditions. New nurses, who have invested years of education and training, are leaving within five years, seeing firsthand that the job as it exists today is unsustainable.

We have seen solutions work. In California, nurses have returned to bedside care because safe staffing ratios were implemented. If we want to recruit and retain skilled nurses, we must create conditions where they can practice safely and ethically—without risking their licenses, their mental health, or their bodies.

Nurses are not leaving the profession—we are being pushed out. Please take action to stem this loss before the workforce crisis becomes irreversible.

Thank you,
Jennifer Michelson, RN, BSN
Eagan, MN