

**Remarks of Cokie Giles, RN  
President, Maine State Nurses Association/NNOC/NNU  
LD 1639 Maine Quality Care Act  
May 4, 2023  
Augusta, Maine**

Hello Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Cokie Giles. I am the President of the Maine State Nurses Association, which is affiliated with National Nurses United, the largest and fastest-growing union for Registered Nurses in the United States.

In addition to being the President of MSNA, I am also a Vice President of National Nurses United. I live in Brewer, Maine.

And, I have been a registered nurse at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor for 34 years. In my time as a nurse, I have witnessed first-hand the disintegration of working conditions for nurses within our healthcare system, where patients are monetized and profits are maximized. Given that the conditions in which nurses work are the exact conditions in which patients receive care, nurses are the natural allies of, and advocates for, the patients to whom they give care.

Our mandate to give patients the best possible care is what drove so many registered nurses to be here today. We have all seen the effect that short staffing has, not only on our patients, but also on us as caregivers. We all know nurses who have left the bedside because they were not allowed to give the care that their patients deserved.

But we also know that nurses will come back to the bedside if working conditions (and patient care conditions) improve. That is the point of LD 1639, The Maine Quality Care Act.

It is important for you all to know that we aren't hoping and wishing for better working conditions and lower patient ratios to bring nurses back to the bedside. We have data to show that this will happen. As you may know, the State of California passed a safe staffing law, much like what we're proposing here, back in 1999. After that law was implemented in California, nurse applications to hospitals shot up by 60%.

It's common sense that the more patients a nurse has to care for the less time she has for each them. And we also have authoritative data to show that assigning fewer patient per nurse reduces injury to nurses, workplace violence, patient falls and other negative outcomes, and improves the overall quality of care that patients receive. Not to mention that sensible, safe nurse-to-patient ratios improve the retention rate of Registered Nurses, doing the work they love and that they were trained to do.

Nurses know there is not a shortage of nurses, but rather a shortage of nurses who are willing to work in these current conditions, where they are regularly short-staffed. Help us bring nurses

back to the bedside. Help us solve this nurse staffing crisis. Help us give patients the care they need and deserve. Please support LD 1639, the Maine Quality Care Act.

Thank you.