

Senator Tipping, Representative Daughtry, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Brandie Rubin. I am from Scarborough, and I am a Registered Nurse with over 13 years of nursing experience. I am writing to oppose LD 1639.

This Bill claims that it will improve patient care by addressing staffing of Nurses. On the surface this seems like an easy decision. The data clearly shows that safe Nurse/Patient ratios result in safer care and better patient outcomes. The evidence tells us, based on specialty, how many patients our Nurses should be charged with on our shifts. Professional Nursing organizations, including the American Nurses Association, make recommendations to healthcare facilities based upon that evidence. Healthcare agencies already monitor staffing ratios. CMS, JCAHO, and DHHS Licensing Division, all have staffing requirements that must be adhered to in order to maintain licensure.

It has been found that Nurse driven staffing committees, which encourage flexible staffing levels based on individual patient care needs and experience of the Nurses, provide the best patient outcomes. Rigid staffing models that do not consider the dynamic nature of the healthcare needs of the current patient population, and can result in unnecessary restriction on the ability of a healthcare center to care for its patients. This is the Number 1 reason why staffing is best managed by committees in real time, based on evidence based standards of care.

While mandated staffing ratios may seem to make sense, it does nothing to address the fact that we have a nationwide shortage of licensed Registered Nurses, and Maine is no exception. Our largest Healthcare organizations in the state are reporting unprecedented nursing vacancies. The number of vacant nursing positions have grown since the beginning of the pandemic. I have heard from a couple of groups who claim they know the reasons for this. A very small group wants you to believe that it is vaccine mandates. The Maine State Nurses Association, part of National Nurses United, who are organizing public rallies in support of this legislation, want you to believe that there isn't a nursing shortage at all. Both of these groups couldn't be more wrong. The largest Nurses Union in the state continues to ignore the evidence and continues to throw Nurses under the bus by pushing their false narrative. Nurses endured months of abuse by this union during the Covid-19 pandemic, while they made false promises to fix these issues for us, but they have been failing Nurses in this state for decades. This is not an organization that speaks for Nurses working hard each and every day.

Nurses across the country have been sounding the alarm for decades that we do not have enough Nurses to care for our aging population, especially when our own are aging out and retiring as well. The shortage is continuing to grow. Moral injury is widespread. What was once considered the most trusted profession, are now subjected to abusive patients, sicker patients due to failures in our healthcare system, dismal healthcare reimbursement rates from Medicare/Medicaid and private health insurers, and the burden of over regulation. We can't bring in more Nurses because we have too few seats available in Nursing schools. We have a bottleneck at clinical sites, partially due to the lack of Nurses available to teach future nurses. Before we can even begin to think about mandating ratios, we need to ensure we have enough nurses to meet that need without compromising access to care. I implore you to look at ways to increase the number of Nurses such as providing for student loan reimbursement, build more relationships between nursing schools and hospitals, and increase their pay by increasing reimbursement for services. Then, we can look at nurse ratio mandates. For these reasons, I hope you will vote Ought Not To Pass. Thank you.