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My name is Erica Caron, I am a Masters Prepared Registered Nurse for 18 years and a nurse at a small community hospital and adjunct faculty with a local nursing program. As these opinions are my own I will not be speaking on behalf of either organization or name them explicitly.

I am very concerned about this bill; while I am all for safe staffing I feel it is very short-sighted and goes way to far to hamstringing hospitals given the nursing workforce shortage and the post-COVID financial situation facing hospitals nationwide. This bill could inevitably destroy local community hospitals such as mine who operate on shoestring budgets as it is, leaving members of the community without jobs and without care in a time when access is already a challenge in our area. This bill would hinder progress as money for technological and capital advancements would need to be diverted away to staffing, and more specifically, traveling nursing staff that is already eating up hospital budgets. My hospital is sitting on multiple open nursing positions and can't fill full time vacancies due to the state-and national nursing shortage. In my nursing school role, many graduates state they don't want to stay in the Bangor area for a multitude of reasons. I think money and time could better be spent looking at ways to develop our workforce and incentivize young people to stay in the area to provide the nursing staff we need. This isn't a matter of hospitals not wanting to staff but workforce availability, community health (for example, impact of violent patients with untreated mental health diagnoses on nurse retention), reimbursement structures and healthcare regulation that diverts limited funds away from the bedside into now-necessary administrative functions. This is a systemic issue that cannot be fixed by excessive ratios.