

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Labor and Housing Committee, my name is Christine Anderson. I have been a registered nurse for over 35 years and have had the privilege of working in critical care, education and nursing leadership. I am here today because I oppose LD 1639.

This bill removes my autonomy as a nurse to be involved in the decisions about staffing that are fluid and take in account the unique needs and acuity of each patient. I find this bill in conflict with the Code of Ethics for Nursing. Direct care nurses are leaders, it is inherent to our role to ensure that our voice is part of the decision making that is involved in the delivery of care. This has been my experience as a nurse in here in the state of Maine for my entire career.

I struggle with the lack of evidence to support this bill. It cannot be found. What I do know is that the healthcare provided in Maine is recognized as being in the top quartile in the country for quality and safety. In comparison, we know that California (the only state with a mandated ratio,) sits in the bottom quartile for quality and care outcomes.

I believe this bill will be detrimental to the health of our communities. The mandated ratio will force a reduction in bed capacity and access to care. We know in the current state, as we climb out of the pandemic, that capacity is critical. There is backup in our emergency departments and a tremendous shortage of post-acute beds. The impact of further reduction, due to the mandate, is frightening for those we are seeking to protect.

The mandate will not fix the shortage of nurses in our state. As stated earlier it will only impose harm to those we are committed to care for by reducing access. While the use of travelers supports care delivery in the short run, it is not sustainable for local health systems and deters from the development of long term caring, trusting relationships. Evidence does support improved care outcomes of well- connected care team.

I would ask our legislators to support efforts to increase the number of nursing faculty to maximize enrollment in our nursing programs. It is through education that we will improve and strengthen our nursing workforce here in Maine. Ratios will not.