

Hearing Remarks for LD1639, by Jackie Fournier, RN

Good afternoon, Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Jackie Fournier, and I am a registered nurse on the Mother Baby unit at Maine Medical Center, where I have spent 25 years caring for countless new Maine families.

I am proud and honored to be standing before you and alongside so many of my amazing nursing colleagues as well as families that I have personally cared for while they welcomed our next generation of tiny Mainers into the world.

I am here today, despite my INTENSE aversion to public speaking, to share with you how critical it is for Maine nurses to earn your support for LD1639, The Maine Quality Care Act.

I'd like to keep it simple and personal: **As nurses, we know that safe staffing saves lives!**

"Safe staffing" is not a "cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all" approach and nobody knows what "safe" and "unsafe" look like better than the RN at your bedside trying to provide the best possible care to you and your loved ones. Unfortunately, and shockingly, there is **NO CAP** on how many patients we can care for at one time! This **NEEDS** to change!

A great deal of our nursing care involves providing emotional support and guidance to struggling patients and families. That care takes TIME.... time that we don't have when we are caring for too many patients than we can safely and adequately care for.

While childbirth is often one of the most joyous and special times in peoples' lives, it can also be one of the most heartbreaking and devastating....

We care for families who have experienced severe and unexpected complications during childbirth whose visions of "the perfect birth" morph into more of a "horrific nightmare" when

their precious newborns must be urgently admitted to the NICU instead of delicately handed into the loving arms of their awaiting parents.

What does safe staffing mean to me?

It means that I don't have to rush away from a sobbing Mom who just watched her perfect baby take its last breath in the NICU. It means that I will have enough time to help a patient learn to breastfeed her newborn who is struggling to feed. It means that I can help a 16-year-old learn to shift gears to learn to be a mom at a time when she thought she'd be hanging out with her friends and going to school.

We care for your families- your mothers, fathers, daughters & sons, husbands & wives, your grandparents, grandchildren and your closest friends. We do what we love, and we love what we do, but we simply **MUST** have enough nurses to do our jobs safely and well! Countless nurses have left hospital nursing or nursing altogether due to "burnout." When you leave shift after shift with the feeling that you just couldn't do ENOUGH because you were too over-extended, it takes a toll on even the strongest of nurses. What is being proposed here will ATTRACT nurses to acute care settings and RETAIN them.

So today, I stand before you urging you to **PLEASE** help us take the next step. This bill acts as the floor, not the ceiling, to developing safe staffing ratios across the state.

What we truly need from you is your vote of support for LD1639.

Please support US so that we can safely support YOU and your loved ones in their times of greatest need! Thank you!