Hello. My name is Lori Poland, and I am a resident of Windham.

I am here today to speak in support of the Maine Quality Care Act as a patient and a community member because this act will increase safety not just for me and my family, but also the entire community.

Last March I ended up in the emergency department because of an infection and internal bleeding. I was admitted almost immediately and spent 5 days in the hospital. Besides being in pain, I was very dizzy from the loss of blood and required assistance to avoid falls. Let me first say that the nurses were amazing people. Unfortunately, there were not enough of them for all the patients that had been admitted and I was put into danger on more than one occasion because of it.

The first day I was told I needed to shower because I was having surgery. I managed to get into the shower with assistance but when I was done there was no one to help me. When my calls went unanswered, I carefully made my way to sit down on the toilet and had to sit there for over 10 minutes before someone came to help me back to bed. This may not seem like much, but when you're in extreme pain every moment seems like an eternity.

This type of waiting occurred several times during my hospital stay. At one point, my IV had infiltrated and my arm was swelling. Thankfully my mother was visiting me at the time, and she shut the IV down because it took 20 minutes before anyone came to help.

Eventually the nursing supervisor came to the floor and helped the RN's with the heavy patient load, but she was also fielding phone calls regarding other patients WHILE she was refilling my IV or emptying my drain. Thankfully she didn't make any mistakes, but that type of distraction is dangerous.

In February of this year, I needed another surgery. I went to a different hospital this time and had the operation scheduled in advance. I was told I would be spending at least one night in the hospital. I ended up staying in the recovery area from noon until 2 AM because of lack of staff. I was assigned to a floating RN who was great, but she didn't know where things were and struggled to get me what I needed when I needed it.

None of these situations were fair to me or to the RN's who were trying to do their best in a frustrating and exhausting environment.

Lori Poland, 503 Falmouth Rd, Windham, ME 04062 – LoriPoland@gmail.com

I am a full-time caretaker for my disabled brother. He has many medical issues and I worry about the type of care he will get during his next hospital stay. He can't speak up for himself, so it falls to me or another family member to stay with him and be his voice. I worry about what would happen if we were injured or ill as well and unable to help him.

I also worry about the community in general. These RN's are working longer hours, sometimes during forced overtime. Then these exhausted individuals must drive home, through our communities. This is just a recipe for disaster that we've seen before, and it's something that this bill will help avoid.

Some hospitals do better with staffing than others, but patient safety should not depend on your location. Mainers take care of each other. That's one of the best things about living here. It is time that we support the people who take care of us in our most vulnerable moments. I would like to think that a healthcare facility would not put profit over patient care and safety, but we need to this bill to make sure they don't.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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