

Good morning Senator Claxon, Representative Meyer and esteemed committee members, I am here to urge you to vote "ought to pass" for LD 867.

I am a RN of 13 years. I refused the COVID vaccine and lost my job because I was not able to get a fully informed, voluntary consent. My doctor was unable to give me long term studies on this new technology so I was forced to air on the side of safety and therefore lose my job.

I have contact with over 1,800 Healthcare workers who said they were willing to be fired when the mandate was announced. Our healthcare infrastructure was already fragile and this extra burden is unprecedented. Since 3/2020 there have been 4 waves of healthcare workers leaving the field and you are about to see the fifth.

1. Fear caused early retirement or changing careers
2. Left for travel nursing jobs and higher pay
3. The Mandate which made it unlawful to work even if we wanted to
4. Burn out, stress, exhaustion, unsafe working conditions, and fear of risking our licenses.

At the present, we are not in a bed shortage, we have a staffing shortage. The patient can not be admitted if there is no nurse to care for them.

Our number one issue is with our Nursing homes. The Maine population is overwhelmingly elderly in need of 24/7 care. After the mandate a number of Nursing homes closed and many had to reduce the number of beds they were able to accommodate due to staffing. As a result, elderly and those needing long term care (LTC) were forced to reside in a hospital bed. The National Guard has been called in "nonclinical roles" to help accommodate this issue, creating "makeshift LTC units" I am told. Consider the day to day life of that precious elderly person being shuffled around like a homeless orphan.

Next, we have the ambulance crisis. I will list reports I received. Residents of Sherman were served by Patten Ambulance service who announced as of 12/31 they would be unable to extend their contract due to staffing. Washington County lost 20+ employees alone. I am told that care was rationed, delayed, and deaths resulted. Ellsworth frequently reported they "ran out of ambulances" due to staffing. Sipayik is frequently out of service due to staffing and they are the backup for Calais and Machias.

ER's across the state have been functioning on what we call "bare bones" staffing.

Bangor staff reported "red status" and had just 3 nurses working. CMMC and RFGH lost their 24 hour neurologist coverage.

OR's across the state have been on pause. Some may say it's due to a COVID surge but those on the inside know it is also a result of staffing issues and I am here to make sure you are aware of this reality. If there are not enough staff members to care for a post-op patient then the surgery can not be completed.

It was reported that MMC OR is 2000 cases behind in its elective surgeries since the pandemic first came to Maine. That means care is delayed and it is being rationed. What may be listed as elective still holds consequence to the patient expecting that surgery.

FMH is presently pausing its surgeries for 30 days. St Marys elective surgeries are paused.

Oncology nurses are reporting they are seeing more advanced breast cancers because patients have trouble getting into an apt in a timely manner due to staffing shortages.

Dialysis has been reportedly rationed due to staffing issues in the pharmacy where they mix the solution.

A MMC Nursing Director reportedly had a panic attack and was heard stating "Maine Med is slowly burning to the ground".

Generally speaking, nurses are reporting that they are being floated to units that they are not specialized in, putting patients at risk. ICUs are also operating under "bare bones" staffing which I shouldn't have to say- is extremely risky and concerning. Travel nurses are staffing entire units throughout hospitals in Maine. This is putting patients at risk because they get 2 days of training on protocols and procedures. Charge nurses who typically don't take a patient assignment so that they can be a resource are taking up to 5 patients. Nurses are not just nurses, they are functioning as the nurses aide, the dietary aide, the housekeeper and the transporter all the while with a patient ratio of 1:5 and up to 7 on nights.

The Healthcare workers are tired. They are totally exhausted. And now they are mandating the booster.

You will now begin to see the 5th wave of HCW leaving the field. They took their 2 shots but they are not willing to be boosted.

WGME reported on Jan. 6th that as of Wed the 5th over 1300 vaccinated Healthcare workers were out due to COVID. The mandate is confounding an incredible problem with our healthcare infrastructure and this Bill is our last line of defense to stop the ship from sinking.

Think about you or your family needing healthcare at this time. It is not safe to be in the hospital right now. For a disease that is 99% survivable, mandating an experimental injection that does not prevent the disease nor the transmission is unconscionable. Please, pass this Bill and let us go back to work.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Nixon, RN