

Ashley Schumacher  
Freeport  
LD 1639

Ashley Schumacher, RN, BSN  
Regarding LD 1639 “An Act to Address Unsafe Staffing of Nurses and Improve Patient Care” or “The Maine Quality Care Act”  
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Thank you Senator Tipping and the members of the Committee on Labor and Housing for your time and consideration today. My name is Ashley Schumacher. I live in Freeport and have worked as a registered nurse in Maine since 2009. In 2022, like many of my peers, I made the difficult decision to leave my bedside nursing career after 13 years at what is now Northern Light Mercy Hospital in Portland. I worked at the Birthplace, a labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum unit performing all the aforementioned descriptors of the unit in addition to circulating in the unit’s operating room, caring for newborns in the Level 2 nursery, triaging patients and acting as resource (or charge) nurse over the years. It was an honor and a privilege to serve in these roles.

The patients I cared for are decidedly not on the list of reasons I left the hospital bedside. Instead, I found myself exhausted and over-stressed by higher patient acuity, “acceptable” ratios of one nurse to three parent-and-baby couplets, performing multiple roles in a single shift, and seemingly endless required menial tasks that pulled me away from direct patient care. I was also required to be frequently available, or “on call,” to the hospital on my days off.

Passing LD 1639 will not only help improve patient care by giving nurses more time at the bedside, it will also ensure nurses are more likely to work on the days they are scheduled, thereby being able to use their paid time off for actual vacation/personal days rather than making up for days they have been called off work for “low census.” These safer staffing ratios will allow for bedside nurses to complete their annual mandatory corporate compliance training and insurance-mandated education in addition to continuing education units, specialty-based certifications and unit-based education/drills within their scheduled working hours, creating a better work-life balance. All of these factors will serve to establish Maine not only as a place to receive excellent medical care, but also as an attractive place to work for new nurses and prevent burn-out in experienced nurses like me who are considering leaving the profession altogether. This bill recognizes the unique role, education and expertise of the registered nurse and sets realistic expectations for each individual nurse to provide safe, excellent care to patients in a hospital setting.

Thank you for your work on this committee and for the time and consideration you have granted me today.