

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Phyllis Mundy

DATE: July 18, 2011

RE: Legislation to set minimum nurse to patient ratios in hospitals

I will soon introduce legislation to set minimum staffing ratios of registered nurses to patients in Pennsylvania hospitals.

Compelling evidence reveals that increased RN-to-patient staffing ratios dramatically improve patient safety and also reduce costs to hospitals. My bill sets specific RN-to-patient ratios for various hospital units based on the nature of care provided. For example, a neo-natal intensive care unit would have 1:2 RN-to-patient minimum ratio while a pre-surgical unit would have a 1:4 minimum ratio.

Statistics show that patients cared for in hospitals with higher RN staffing levels are far less likely to acquire preventable infections. And not only do preventing these infections and other medical errors reduce loss of life, but they could also reduce health care costs by as much as 30%, according to *Health Services Research*.

A number of other states have already instituted such ratios. In fact, due in large part to a state law which requires safe RN-to-patient ratios in hospitals, the nursing shortage in California has begun to turn around. According to *Board of Registered Nursing* data, since California's ratio law was signed, the number of registered nurses in California has grown by approximately 100,000. Many of California's largest hospital systems have seen their turnover and vacancy rates fall below 5%, which is far below the national average.

In short, my bill would improve patient safety, reduce medical malpractice claims, and avoid unnecessary, uncompensated care while also helping to address Pennsylvania's nursing shortage.

If you would like to join me as a co-sponsor of this bill, please contact Kris Bernard in my Harrisburg office at kbernard@pahouse.net or (717) 783-1614.