



3605 Vartan Way, Suite 203
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Phone: 717.657.1222
Email: panurses@psna.org

www.psna.org

Testimony
Pennsylvania House Health Committee Public Hearing
Patient Safety Act HB106
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David Scher MPH, MSN, RN, CEN

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I have been a nurse in Pennsylvania for almost twelve years, ten of which have been in emergency nursing.

I'm here to speak in support of the patient safety act, HB 106. This bill would limit the number of patients nurses can be assigned, with regard for the patients' required level of care. Most importantly, nurses would share the task of deciding what those limits would be.

The pandemic has shed a stark and tragic light on the state of nursing, and specifically our well-being. This staffing issue is not new; however, the results of the pandemic have truly brought this issue to the forefront of health care and nursing writ large.

Understaffing leads to poor patient outcomes, leading to increased burnout of nurses, poor attrition, and frequent turnover, thus perpetuating a cycle of sub-optimal staffing. We also know that poor staffing correlates to worse patient outcomes and higher rates of adverse events, such as falls, wound pressure injuries, infections and even fatalities.

Those of us who have worked clinically can attest to this, the one extra patient to your already busy and overwhelming assignment who won't be getting the care they truly deserve because, sadly, we are too busy running from one patient to another. While we as nurses strive to do our best, that one extra patient can be the straw that breaks the camel's back; it's the patient that we so desperately want to give the same care as the others that, due to staffing shortages, often falls through the cracks. I can speak to this personally, having treated patients I think of after my shift on my way home, repetitively asking myself, "Did I give them the best care? Was I able to truly provide the care they and their loved ones deserve?" This frequent moral injury has snowballed into a significant exodus of either leaving for travel assignments that are often more lucrative and, in some cases, have staffing ratios. Others have left the bedside entirely. As an adjunct faculty member, I have had students that I have trained who are already contemplating leaving the bedside feeling as though the career they have trained for is not the one they are now doing.

As for the patients, I've seen the sadness, frustration, vitriol, and fear they gone through regarding staffing, especially since the pandemic.

This is why the passage of the patient safety act is so important. Improved staffing will result in both better nursing and patient outcomes. For more than twenty years, nurses have been regarded as the most trusted profession. The difficulties I've described above are echoed in the experiences of the nurses who are here today, and the thousands more who serve the people of this state.

I love being a nurse. I've wanted to be one since I was a kid. But the pandemic which was only made more difficult by staffing loss and constant turnover have made many of us, even me, question staying in it. The Patient Safety Act has boosted my morale and the morale of all nurses in Pennsylvania, union, and non-union alike. Patient safety is and always will be a nursing issue, and our patients will be safer if HB 106 passes.

I urge you to support it and vote for it.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to any questions you may have.