

# MI NURSES Association

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## ***MI Voters: Lack of Limits on Nurses' Workloads is Hurting Patient Care in Hospitals***

### *Bipartisan effort renews push for law to establish minimum RN staffing*

By an overwhelming margin, voters want their legislators to improve care in Michigan hospitals by establishing a law that sets minimum nurse staffing levels, according to a new poll that is the first of its kind in the state.

"Michigan residents are saying loud and clear that our registered nurses are being forced to care for too many patients at once," said Rep. Jon Hoadley (D-Kalamazoo), House sponsor of the Safe Patient Care Act. "Chronic nurse understaffing jeopardizes the care and safety of people in our hospitals every day. The only real solution is to pass a law that gives nurses enough time to spend with each patient and provide individualized care."

There is currently no law that requires hospitals to have a certain number of nurses working at any given time. The Safe Patient Care Act, which will soon be introduced in the House by Hoadley and in the Senate by Sen. Rebekah Warren, requires minimum RN staffing in hospitals and curbs the rampant use of mandatory overtime. It has bipartisan support in both chambers.

#### **The new scientific poll of Michigan voters shows that:**

- 77 percent of voters agree that "the quality of patient care in MI hospitals is suffering because registered nurses are being assigned too many patients per shift."
- 44 percent of households with an overnight hospital stay in the past two years believe the quality of care suffered due to nurses having too many patients at one time.
- 80 percent of voters favor passing a law establishing minimum nurse staffing levels in Michigan hospitals.

"Registered nurses want to make sure that every patient, no matter what hospital you go to, receives quality care and is protected from harm," said John Armelagos, an RN at University of Michigan Health System and Michigan Nurses Association president. "The facts show that stretching nurses too thin leads to more patient infections, falls, complications and even deaths. Michigan needs a law so that every patient gets the nursing care they need, not the amount of care allowed by number crunchers focused on making money."

Registered nurse understaffing is a public health issue, Warren said.

“It makes no sense that we limit the number of hours people can fly airplanes and drive trucks but put no limits on nurses’ hours,” Warren said. “It’s dangerous and unfair to patients when nurses are so exhausted that they must compromise care and can’t protect their patients from harm.”

Rep. Larry Inman (R-Williamsburg) said he is cosponsoring the bill because he frequently hears from hospital nurses in his district who can’t provide quality care because they are assigned too many patients.

“It’s just plain wrong that when you go into the hospital, your nurse could have far too many patients to be safe,” Inman said. “A nurse’s workload can literally be a matter of life or death for you or your loved one. This is a case where the government needs to enact reasonable standards to protect all its citizens, and I’m glad to see bipartisan movement toward achieving that.”

### **About the legislation**

The Safe Patient Care Act will improve care for patients by requiring Michigan hospitals to:

- Implement a staffing plan specific to each unit that adheres to minimum nurse-to-patient ratios based on research and national professional standards.
- Limit mandatory RN overtime to instances of genuine emergencies.
- Disclose their actual RN staffing levels and inform patients of how to report potential violations of the law.

### **About the poll**

The statewide survey of 600 Michigan voters was commissioned by the Michigan Nurses Association and conducted by telephone (landlines and cell phones) between the dates of September 8 through 14, 2015. The results are representative of all Michigan voters statewide, with a margin of error of +/- 4%. Anderson Robbins Research, a Boston firm, conducted the survey and was chosen because it has worked with both nursing and hospital organizations and Democratic and Republican clients. A memorandum reporting the results of the survey is available upon request.

- A list and description of key scientific research showing the link between RN understaffing and poor outcomes for patients is available at [www.MIsaferhospitals.org](http://www.MIsaferhospitals.org).
- Graphics representing survey results are available for download: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ukxnhz9e64qe4de/AADq62REaXHcVKsAQI10qRika?dl=0>

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