

The Safe Patient Care Act: *A plan to increase the safety of patients in Michigan hospitals and build and retain a strong nursing workforce.*

Problem: There is no law that limits the number of patients a nurse can be assigned to take care of in the hospital. There is an alarming and unsafe variety of standards among Michigan hospitals. There is also no law to prevent hospitals from making nurses work unlimited hours without advanced notice (shifts of 14, 16 or even 20 hours, often with little to no rest in between).

Too often, this means your nurse must juggle too many patients or work past the point of exhaustion. Nurses work hard and make every effort to provide quality care and protect patients from harm. *But understaffing and overworking nurses is dangerous for patients (increased falls, infections, medication errors and even deaths). Patient harm is the third-leading cause of death in America, and much of that can be prevented by proper RN staffing.*

Solution: A package of three state bills aimed at addressing rampant RN understaffing and excessive use of forced RN overtime. This will force administrators to make decisions based on patients' needs, rather than misguided cost-cutting in the highly profitable hospital industry.

A) **Safe RN staffing levels in all hospitals.** Bill overview:

House Bill 4629, Rep. **Jon Hoadley** (D-Kalamazoo)/Senate Bill 387, Sen. **Rebekah Warren** (D-Ann Arbor)

- A committee of at least 50 percent direct-care RNs plans and monitors staffing levels.
- Minimum safe RN staffing, based on national evidence-based standards, by unit (example: maximum of four patients per RN on a medical-surgical floor).
- Hospital must post information about the law and inform patients about how to report violations.
- State runs a toll-free hotline to receive complaints.
- Whistleblower protection for those who report violations.
- Additional time for rural hospitals to comply.
- Fines for non-compliance, to create true accountability.

B) **Limits on forced overtime for RNs.** Bill overview:

House Bill 4630, Rep. **Stephanie Chang** (D-Detroit)/Senate Bill 388, Sen. **Tom Casperson** (R-Escanaba)

- Nurses can't be ordered to work more 12 hours (a standard, expected shift in many hospitals).
- RNs can still volunteer for overtime, if any is needed, if they know they can provide safe care.
- RNs must have 8 continuous hours off after a shift of 12 hours or more, to rest.
- Nurses are protected from discipline, firing or losing their license if they refuse unplanned extended shifts.
- The limits will be suspended during emergency situations or when a nurse is in the middle of a critical patient procedure.

C) **Hospital transparency.** Bill overview:

House Bill 389, Rep. **Aaron Miller** (R-Sturgis)/Senate Bill 4631, Sen. **Joe Hune** (R-Fowlerville)

- Hospitals must disclose to the public their actual RN-to-patient ratios, which are closely tied to patient outcomes, so consumers can make informed choices and everyone has real data to evaluate. There is currently no law requiring this transparency.