NEWS from the Michigan Nurses Association

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# Bipartisan plan supports nurses, protects hospital patients

*Safe Patient Care Act limits RNs' assignments, forced overtime*

A bipartisan group of state legislators has come together to introduce a plan that would support registered nurses and help make sure everyone in Michigan hospitals gets the best care possible by setting safe limits on the number of patients a nurse can be assigned, curbing forced RN overtime, and requiring hospitals to disclose their staffing information.

The plan, known as the Safe Patient Care Act, has dozens of co-sponsors and consists of three bills in both the House and Senate.

"We have seen through the pandemic that it's never been more important to ensure that every nurse can give each and every patient the time they need," said Jamie Brown, RN, a critical care nurse and president of the Michigan Nurses Association. "Legislators of both parties understand that the lack of laws supporting nurses is harmful, and that safe RN staffing saves lives. Michigan residents need the Safe Patient Care Act passed because everyone in the hospital deserves the care and attention of a registered nurse."

Years of scientific research show a clear link between inadequate RN staffing and increased infections, re-admissions, and even deaths among hospital patients.

The bills in the package are sponsored in the state House and Senate by:

**Limit the number of patients a nurse can be assigned**

**Rep. Yousef Rabhi (D-Ann Arbor), House Bill 4482**: "Michigan has no law putting a limit on nurses' patient assignments, which means nurses are stretched too thin too often because of barebones staffing. The pandemic has made clear that we need safe staffing in place before a crisis, not afterward. Nurses have rightly been applauded as heroes, but they deserve more than praise. They need laws that enable them to give the care that every patient needs, every time. This law will prioritize patient care over profits."

**Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Vulcan), Senate Bill 204**: "Nurses across the U.P. have told me they simply want to provide the best care possible to every patient, but sometimes they have too many people to take care of to do that. We need laws that hold hospitals accountable so that all of us, no matter where we live, can get the nursing care we need. Supporting nurses and protecting public safety aren't partisan issues – that's why Republicans and Democrats are uniting to push for the Safe Patient Care Act."

**Curb forced RN overtime**

**Rep. Sara Cambensy (D-Marquette), HB 4483**: "My mother was a nurse, and I heard many times from her about the rampant use of mandatory overtime and the extreme workloads put on nurses. In the U.P. and across the state, we are losing too many nurses who just cannot keep working

unreasonably long shifts, often without enough rest in between. The pandemic has only made the problem worse. Excessive overtime is bad for nurses and it's dangerous for patients. Putting limits on forced overtime for nurses is the right thing to do for everyone."

**Sen. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit), SB 205:** "We hear heartbreaking stories of nurses working 18, even 20 hours in a row. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have recognized nurses as essential, and this legislation puts those words into action. Too often, forced overtime is the plan, not the exception. No one should be cared for by a nurse who has been working past the point of exhaustion. Laws limit working hours for truck drivers and air traffic controllers, and we should have that for nurses, too, because nurses also have people's lives in their hands."

### Require hospitals to release their RN actual RN-to-patient ratios

**Rep. Roger Hauck (R-Union Township), HB 4484**: "It's only right that we as patients have access to critical information like how many people our nurse has to take care of. Hospitals that are providing proper nurse staffing should be proud to release this information. If there is a problem, the public has a right to know that, too."

**Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield), SB 206**: "Transparency is important in health care, as in other areas. We all should have the right to understand the care that we're getting – and paying for. If I or a loved one must go to the hospital, I want to know how many patients the nurse must take care of, because that makes a big difference in how well people recover. Nurse staffing is important information that everyone should be able to easily find."

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*The Michigan Nurses Association is the largest union and professional association for registered nurses in Michigan.*