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Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee - Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 285.

I am Jeff Dieringer with SEIU District 1199, WV/KY/OH. As Ohio's largest healthcare Union, representing over 20,000 workers in hospitals, home care, and nursing homes, including nurses in some of Ohio's largest hospital systems. I want to emphasize the potential benefits of improved staffing ratios in hospitals. These ratios are not just vital; they are long overdue. They will not only protect the health and well-being of our essential nurses but also significantly enhance patient outcomes for all Ohioans.

Nurses are understaffed, overworked, and underpaid. During the pandemic, these essential workers risked their health and safety every day by showing up to work, and we rightfully lauded them as heroes. Now, they have gone from heroes to zeroes as we actively ignore their concerns surrounding staffing and patient safety. A treasure trove of research illustrates that every additional patient a nurse has to take care of increases the likelihood of adverse patient outcomes. It also illustrates that the lack of staffing ratios has increased burnout and is one of the leading causes of nurses leaving the field. These workers are on the frontlines every day, caring for our loved ones when they need it, and it is about time we care for them when they need it and pass HB 285.

Those opposing these standards, mainly operators and hospital executives, say that mandating staffing ratios and holding hospital systems accountable will lead to more nurse burnout and exacerbate the staffing shortage because they would need to increase staff to meet these standards. Nursing ratios will only improve the staffing shortage because adequate staffing levels lead to decreased burnout and overall better recruitment and retention of nurses. Over 60% of nurses in Ohio are considering leaving the field because of current conditions. Failing to enact staffing ratios that are legally enforceable will exacerbate the shortage, not the other way around.

Ohio must pass HB 285 now. Unless we do something about it, nurses will continue to leave the field due to burnout and exhaustion, and patients will continue to experience increased negative health outcomes. Nurses need safe staffing now, and they need HB 285 to become law. Thank you for your time.