

Testimony on House or Senate Bill No. 285  
Jessica Leach  
November 18, 2024

Chair D.J. Swearingen, Ranking Member Rep.Ghanbari, Rep.Rogers, and members of the  
Health Providers Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jessica Leach. I am a registered nurse, licensed since Feb.2021, and have worked Intensive Care through the pandemic and after. I strongly support Bill No.285 about Nursing staffing plans.

I began as a newly graduated nurse during the second wave of the pandemic. This was not my plan, but in the field of nursing, you adapt as needed with change for benevolence, so that is what all of nursing did, they adapted. But with those critical, emergency adaptations, also came increased nurse to patient ratios because there were no alternatives. Everything was critical during these times, it was literal life and death decisions, happening every shift, every hour, every minute. Once nurses everywhere showed how they could adapt and handle intense heavy loads in critical times, some of those dangerously high staff to patient ratios are still upheld to this day to save on costs by facilities. But those increased ratios are not best for patient safety, increase burnout in the nurse workforce, increase mental stress of nurses, decline in mental health of nurses, essentially exacerbating an army of trained skilled professionals to leave jobs that they entered because they were excited to work in this field, help people and make a difference. Per AACN, “total supply of RN’s decreased by more than 100,000 from 2020 to 2021-the largest drop than ever observed over the past four decades”. (AACN) Healthcare is one of the most essential public services that this country requires to function at the most basic level of human needs. From the POTUS or CEO to the local bagger or homeless person, every human requires medical care at some point in their life, and that should be provided in a safe clean facility, by trained professionals, with safe ratios to provide high quality care.

Legislation was not able to help fast enough during those emergent times, but it can help now. The call for legislation to address these staffing issues and provide sustainable solutions is not just necessary—it's urgent. We need policies that prioritize patient safety, nurse well-being, and the long-term sustainability of the healthcare workforce. It's clear that without those changes, we risk further harm to both patients and healthcare professionals.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote YES on this important, intensely needed bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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*Nursing Shortage Fact Sheet.* AACN. (n.d.). <https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/fact-sheets/nursing-shortage>