

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act
Proponent Testimony by Dana Walters, RN

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee.

My name is Dana Walters, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 285. I have been a nurse for 30 years and would like to share an example of how poor staffing and excessive patient loads can lead to negative outcomes for both patients and nurses.

Recently, while working in the Emergency Department (ED), I was forced to care for six psychiatric patients simultaneously due to inadequate staffing ratios. While one patient was acting out, another attempted to escape. The situation escalated to the point where the patient had to be restrained by security and urgently medicated. Had mandated nurse-to-patient staffing ratios been in place, I could have spent more time with the patient who tried to escape. This might have allowed me to intervene earlier and provide medication proactively, potentially avoiding physical harm and additional psychiatric trauma.

Two weeks ago, the ED was exceptionally busy with several critically ill patients. Due to staff calling in sick, nurses were assigned 1–2 additional patients, exceeding the usual 4:1 ratio. This left us feeling that the care we were able to provide was inadequate. Many of us were deeply concerned about the risk of missing critical details or making errors because we were stretched too thin, both mentally and physically.

Mandated staffing ratios would significantly improve patient outcomes and provide nurses with the support needed to deliver safe, high-quality care.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Best wishes,
Dana Walters, RN