

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act
Proponent Testimony by Jennifer Blandi-Scruggs, LPN-M-IV

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

My name is Jennifer and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 285. For 35 years, I have been in healthcare, 20 of which I have been a nurse. There have been many changes, developments and advances in technology that have occurred during this time. The one thing that has not changed, is the ever increasing demand for qualified, experienced, compassionate nurses. Nursing is demanding, hospital nurses are expected to begin discharge planning upon admission, always being several steps ahead, anticipating the needs of our patients, the physicians and family members. We are continually assessing the patient from head to toe, mental status, vital signs, intake and output, nutritional needs, medications/med passes, labs, testing, x-rays, therapy, reactions to medications, starting and maintaining IV's, care plans, teaching, assisting physicians with procedures, communicating with various members of the healthcare team, assisting fellow nurses, mentoring new nurses, communicating with physicians and family members, charting, caring for and keeping our patients safe. Stopping to do a new admission, initiate an IV on a patient with limited access, or assist with an active code, all take time, precious time that a nurse who has a heavy patient load, and is trying their best to help everyone, may find themselves in an unsafe situation for themselves and their patients.

Of course this was just a brief overview of the endless tasks nurses are responsible for, all while being a professional and maintaining their license (continuing education, ALS/BLS). On top of everything mentioned, add the stressors of a heavy patient load, being short staffed and many times underpaid.

During my career, I have been the patient, caregiver and nurse. I have witnessed the good, bad and ugly at each stage. There have been nights that we were so understaffed, that I was pulled twice during one shift to another floor, you could imagine how this might set someone up for a host of patient safety issues. Additionally with unsafe nurse/patient ratios, medication passes become a serious cause for concern. In many of the higher acuity settings, the amount of time to properly care for one patient can be overwhelming, let alone multiple, and if you do not have support staff, assisting with turning/ repositioning the patient, bathing and toileting needs, skin breakdown occurs, infection, sepsis and possible death may occur.

We as nurses are advocates for our patients, but who will advocate for us? That is why it is so imperative that there are safer laws in place for our patients and our nurses.

Thank you,
Jennifer Blandi-Scruggs, LPN-M-IV