

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act
Proponent Testimony by Rhonda Gump, BSN, RN

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

My name is Rhonda Gump, and I am a registered nurse with over 35 years of experience. I reside in Sidney, Ohio, located in Shelby County, and I am submitting this written testimony to share my personal experiences and concerns regarding safe staffing standards in Ohio's healthcare facilities.

I began my nursing career in 1988 and have dedicated much of my life to patient care. In the early 2000s, I worked at a Kaiser Permanente hospital in Sacramento, California, where I experienced firsthand the profound difference that safe staffing ratios make. At that time, California had implemented mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios. On the medical-surgical unit where I worked, my patient load decreased from an overwhelming 7, 8, or sometimes even 9 patients to a manageable 6 patients per nurse. This change drastically improved both patient outcomes and my ability to provide safe, high-quality care.

Unfortunately, in Ohio, unsafe staffing levels remain a persistent issue. In my experience, these unsafe ratios contribute significantly to nurse exhaustion and increase the likelihood of errors, putting both patients and nurses at risk.

In 2019, I made the difficult decision to leave bedside nursing. After decades in the profession, the physical and emotional toll of working in understaffed conditions became unsustainable. As much as I love nursing, I cannot see myself returning to bedside care unless meaningful changes are made to staffing standards. The only scenario where I would return would be out of financial necessity, which reflects the gravity of the current crisis.

I urge you to prioritize and support legislation to establish safe staffing standards in Ohio. Nurses are the backbone of our healthcare system, and without proper staffing, patient care and the nursing profession itself are at risk. Ohio's nurses deserve a safe and supportive working environment, and patients deserve the highest quality of care possible.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Gump, BSN, RN
Sidney, Ohio
Shelby County/Northwest Ohio