

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act
Proponent Testimony by Alana Cottingim

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

My name is Alana Cottingim, and I am a former registered nurse from Putnam County, Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and thoughts with you today regarding the impact of 12-hour shifts and the need for minimum staffing standards in healthcare.

In my time as a registered nurse, I experienced firsthand the toll that 12-hour shifts can take on both nurses and the patients we care for. These extended shifts are not just physically and mentally exhausting; they are also a symptom of a larger issue—chronic understaffing in our healthcare system. Without adequate staffing levels, hospitals often require nurses to work these long hours to fill gaps in coverage.

As someone with autoimmune conditions, the physical demands of these shifts were overwhelming, eventually forcing me to leave the hospital setting. Compounding the strain, there were often no real breaks during those 12 hours, leaving nurses stretched thin and unable to perform at their best. This is not just a workforce issue—it's a patient safety issue.

Minimum staffing standards could be a critical solution to this problem. By ensuring adequate nurse-to-patient ratios, we can reduce the need for excessively long shifts and create a safer, healthier environment for both nurses and patients. When nurses are not overworked, they can provide the quality care that every patient deserves. Additionally, with fair staffing levels, breaks and recovery periods can become a norm rather than a luxury.

I urge this committee to consider minimum staffing standards as a way to address the root causes of unsafe practices like mandatory 12-hour shifts. It's time we prioritize patient care and the well-being of the healthcare professionals who deliver it over profits or convenience.

Thank you for your time and commitment to improving healthcare in Ohio.

Sincerely,
Alana Cottingim
Putnam County, Ohio