

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am a registered nurse working in critical care at Cleveland Clinic Fairview Hospital in Ohio, and I stand before you today to advocate for safer nurse staffing ratios in our state. The issue of nurse staffing has become a critical concern, especially in the intensive care units (ICU) where I work, and I strongly believe that legislative action is necessary to ensure that both patients and nurses receive the care and support they deserve.

As a critical care nurse, I am responsible for the care of patients who are critically ill, often requiring constant monitoring, complex interventions, and frequent adjustments to treatment plans. These patients often face life-threatening conditions such as respiratory failure, severe infections, multi-organ failure, and neurological crises. The nature of the work requires not only technical expertise but also the ability to make rapid decisions under pressure.

Unfortunately, the reality is that current nurse staffing levels are often insufficient to provide the high-quality care that these patients need. In many cases, the demands placed on nurses exceed what is safe or manageable. For example, it is not uncommon for an ICU nurse to be assigned more patients than is safe or appropriate. In some instances, I have been responsible for up to 3 critically ill patients at once—while research and best practices suggest that one nurse should care for no more than 1-2 patients in these settings.

The consequences of unsafe staffing are far-reaching. Under these conditions, nurses are stretched too thin, often unable to give each patient the full attention they require. This compromises patient safety and increases the likelihood of errors, delays in treatment, and poor outcomes. For instance, the inability to closely monitor vital signs, administer medications on time, or respond promptly to deteriorating patients can result in complications that could have been avoided with adequate staffing.

Moreover, inadequate staffing contributes to burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion among nurses. As a critical care nurse, I am acutely aware of the personal toll this work can take, but I also see the toll it takes on my colleagues. The physical and emotional demands of providing high-acuity care without adequate support can lead to increased turnover, a shortage of experienced nurses, and ultimately, a decline in the quality of care that patients receive.

In my role, I have witnessed firsthand the immense pressure placed on nursing staff due to chronic understaffing. We are often forced to prioritize certain tasks over others simply due to time and capacity limitations. This is not a sustainable or ethical model for delivering healthcare, especially in critical care environments where the stakes are life and death.

I am advocating for the implementation of safe staffing ratios that will allow nurses to provide the best care possible without jeopardizing patient safety or the health and well-being of the nursing workforce. Safe staffing ratios are not just a matter of convenience—they are a matter of **patient safety, quality of care, and nurse retention.**

Research has shown that safe staffing ratios lead to better patient outcomes, lower rates of preventable complications, and improved job satisfaction for nurses. A study by the American Nurses Association (ANA) found that hospitals with higher nurse-to-patient ratios have lower rates of patient mortality and readmissions, as well as fewer nurse burnout cases. Additionally, safer staffing leads to better patient experiences and more effective care delivery.

I urge you to take action to pass legislation that mandates safer nurse staffing ratios in Ohio. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. Every day, nurses are on the front lines, caring for Ohioans who are critically ill and vulnerable. It is imperative that we provide them with the tools and resources they need to provide safe, compassionate, and effective care.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to improving healthcare in Ohio. I am confident that with your support, we can make Ohio's healthcare system safer for both patients and nurses.

Sincerely,
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