

**HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act**  
**Proponent Testimony by Karen Perez Steigerwald, BSN, RN, LSN**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill 285. My name is Karen Perez Steigerwald, and I have been a registered nurse for 40 years. I am writing today to share my perspective on the urgent need to pass this legislation to address the staffing crisis and ensure the safety of patients and the sustainability of our nursing profession.

In my four decades as a nurse, I have never seen staffing conditions as dire as they are today. This is not just a problem in Ohio but a national crisis. Nurses of my age—60 years—and younger are leaving the profession in alarming numbers due to overwhelming workloads caused by low staffing levels and high-acuity patients. The situation is unsustainable, and it is having tragic consequences.

Just last month, in October, two preventable deaths occurred at the hospital where I work due to severe understaffing, particularly on weekends. This is not an isolated event. It reflects a systemic problem in hospitals where administrators, often absent during weekends and after-hours, fail to see the reality of short staffing and high-acuity care. Instead, they focus on “looking at numbers” and “cutting costs,” prioritizing budgets over patient and staff safety.

The stress of working under such conditions is pushing nurses to their breaking point. We are stretched too thin, and this not only compromises patient care but also increases the risk of errors. For nurses, this creates a constant fear of inadvertently harming a patient or facing legal action. Without action, more nurses will leave the profession, further exacerbating the crisis.

Compounding this issue, nurses in hospital settings remain significantly underpaid for the work we do. The demands of our profession far outweigh the compensation and support we receive. Without improvements in staffing and working conditions, hospitals will continue to lose experienced and capable nurses, leaving patients to suffer the consequences.

House Bill 285 represents a critical step forward. By ensuring safe staffing levels, this legislation will allow nurses to provide the quality of care our patients deserve while alleviating the pressures that are driving so many out of the profession. Passing this bill will protect patient safety, support the retention of experienced nurses, and ensure that Ohio’s healthcare system remains robust and effective.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I urge you to support House Bill 285 and help create a safer, more sustainable future for nurses and the patients we serve.

Sincerely,

Karen Perez Steigerwald, BSN, RN, LSN