

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act
Proponent Testimony by Callahan Dolacki

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

My name is Michelle Hasskew, and I am an LPN with firsthand experience on the front lines of healthcare. I am submitting this testimony in writing because I am unable to attend in person today. However, I want to express how critical it is to establish and enforce safe staffing ratios in long-term care facilities.

As a floor nurse, I have witnessed how unsafe staffing levels impact both the nurses and the residents who rely on us for their care. This issue affects all direct care staff, including CNAs, STNAs, med techs, LPNs, and RNs. Nearly every day, we face staffing shortages that result in nurses being responsible for 35 or more residents, with aides handling the same or an even greater number.

Despite these challenges, we are held to high standards of care, and we do our very best to meet the needs of our residents. However, we are often disciplined for issues that are beyond our control. For instance, we might miss one of 20 assessments or an aide might not clean a wheelchair—not because we don't care, but because we simply do not have enough time.

The reality is that residents suffer due to the strain on overworked and understaffed caregivers. Long-term care facilities are receiving increasing criticism, but it is important to recognize that the frontline staff working there are doing so out of deep care and commitment to their residents. Unfortunately, healthcare has become a profit-driven industry where the safety and well-being of both staff and residents seem secondary to financial priorities.

Please take this issue seriously. We, as caregivers, take it very seriously because we see the consequences every day. Your support in establishing safe staffing standards is essential to improving the quality of care for Ohio's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for listening and for your commitment to addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,
Michelle Hasskew, LPN