

HB 285 – Nurse Workforce & Safe Patient Care Act

Proponent Testimony by Ronald Zacharias Jr., MSN, RN, RNC-OB, C-EFM

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Ronald Zacharias Jr., and I have been a dedicated nurse serving our community for 16 years. I am here to express my deep concerns about patient safety and to advocate for legislated safe nurse-to-patient ratios in Ohio's healthcare facilities.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed the profound impact that appropriate staffing levels have on both patient outcomes and the well-being of healthcare professionals. When nurses are assigned a manageable number of patients, we are able to provide the kind of attentive, high-quality care that all Ohioans deserve. Adequate staffing directly translates to improved patient outcomes, reduced errors, and increased satisfaction for patients and their families.

On the other hand, when patient-to-nurse ratios are too high, the consequences are stark. Overburdened nurses are more likely to experience burnout and fatigue, and the quality of care we provide inevitably suffers. These challenges place patients and staff alike at significant risk, and they undermine the trust our communities place in our healthcare system.

Evidence-based research has consistently demonstrated that safe nurse staffing ratios:

- Lower the incidence of medical errors,
- Reduce patient complications, and
- Are ultimately cost-effective for healthcare facilities by decreasing costly readmissions and improving patient outcomes.

Moreover, adequate staffing fosters a healthier work environment, reduces nurse turnover, and stabilizes healthcare teams. This, in turn, allows us to deliver consistent, high-quality care that is essential for community health.

As Ohio continues to face healthcare disparities and workforce challenges, it is critical that we adopt policies to safeguard both patients and the nursing profession. Establishing safe nurse-to-patient ratios across all healthcare settings would not only align with best practices but also ensure that patients receive the standard of care they deserve.

Investing in nursing staff is an investment in the health of Ohio's families. Stronger, well-supported healthcare teams create healthier communities. I urge this committee to take bold action and support legislation that prioritizes safe staffing levels.

The lives, health, and safety of Ohioans depend on this critical measure. Let us work together to create a stronger and healthier future for our state.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Ronald Zacharias Jr., MSN, RN, RNC-OB, C-EFM