

August 19, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to be heard as a proponent of House Bill 248.

My name is Brittany Manger and I have been a registered nurse for twelve years specializing in Neonatal Intensive Care and have also earned a Master's Degree in Nursing Education which has allowed me to educate students for the past six years. Greater than these roles, I am a mother of a young, growing family. The reason that I stand in support of House Bill 248 is because as a personal witness to the severe healthcare staffing shortage, I am concerned for the care, safety, and overall health outcomes that we as a nation could face as a result. Even in the lulls of COVID surges, I have on several occasions been required to float to the adult care floors to assist in providing the most basic patient care, as my specialized pediatric skill set does not safely permit me to provide total care for adult patients. As a result of these instances, I have witnessed poor patient satisfaction, the inability for nurses to provide thorough education or timely medication administration, housekeeping needs, delayed procedures, and generally poor staff morale. If staff are currently unable to provide the most basic care needs due to staffing shortages and high patient loads, how can they be expected to give high quality, personalized and intentional care? Without hesitation, healthcare workers across the spectrum can agree that when caregivers are able to invest their time, knowledge and skills, there is greater patient satisfaction, safety, outcomes and even compliance. As an educator of future nurses, I can attest that vast majority of nursing students enter this profession because they feel a calling toward care and compassion rather than just a need to maintain a job. We as an industry, cannot afford to lose skilled, qualified professionals or ancillary staff members or we risk losing the kind of care that a country like America should have. On a more personal level, care that we would want our very own loved ones or selves to receive.

As nurses, we spend our careers educating patients, providing resources, and ultimately advocating for our patients right to decide which course of action is appropriate for them. At times, this means setting aside our biases to respect their decision. If advocacy for informed consent is one of our highest ethical responsibilities, then we also deserve to exercise our rights as patients. As nurses, we are taught to trust our instincts beyond the facts at hand. If those instincts don't provide peace, then there is disequilibrium in our own health which then in turn affects the care we are able to provide. As professionals, we are educated and taught to seek reputable insight. We have lived in the reality of COVID, some being in the inner circle of care. We are able and capable of giving or withholding our consent for a vaccine we are still as a medical community learning about. Many of us are not saying no altogether; we are simply asking for time and space to make the decision that is right for our personal situations.

It is my fear that with mandates looming and stirring uncertainty, healthcare workers will choose to use their giftings in other capacities and therefore setting aside specialized skill sets and experience that are irreplaceable and benefit the greater whole. Nursing students are already voicing their uncertainty in pursuing careers in health care. When placed in constraints of force, an individual will and should exhibit a flight or fight response which are protective of

their personal convictions. The result of healthcare professionals and hopefuls shifting or exiting, is further increasing staff shortages, burnout, resentment toward healthcare corporations and most obviously affecting patient care. The health of our communities is at stake, beyond COVID and future pandemics, but in the day to day. I want to set an example for my children and my patients that intelligible decisions are personal, private, protected, and worthy of being respected. House Bill 248 supports and protects individuals, families, and communities in the above foreseeable avenues.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my personal testimony and insights regarding the urgent need for House Bill 248 to be passed so that our system will not falter in the time of greatest need.

Sincerely,

Brittany Manger RN, MSN