

Submitter: Christine Sciscione

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

Hi, I'm Christine Sciscione, I currently work as a respiratory therapist both as an educator at the collegiate level and an on-call employee at Kaiser Sunnyside Hospital. Respiratory Therapists work with all patient populations, from premature infants to geriatrics, we are hospital wide and a part of all critical care teams, including rapid response, code blue and stroke team. We worked front line during COVID and this decimated our staff and the stragglers that hung on are burned out.

Breathing provides life, and our staffing situation is smothering the respiratory therapists. Admissions don't stop because we are short staffed, we can start a shift with 10 patients and end with 25-30. A staffing committee facilitates increased staff according to census and acuity of the patients for all healthcare professionals. We are an integral part of the interdisciplinary medical team. We run all the ventilators or life support machines in the hospital, in addition to secretions management, inhalation therapy and educate patients on their chronic respiratory diseases.

Many people left the profession after COVID, I among those. We were transitioning patients off the ventilators to end of life at a level never seen, because we had exhausted all of our medical tools in the wheelhouse. We were just devastated as a profession and as people.

Safe staffing improves lives, and not just the patients. Thanks for your time.