

Submitter:

Malia Hayashida-Knight

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4074

I strongly oppose HB 4074 on the basis of section 3 line 32-33, which increases the allowable nurse-patient ratio from 4:1 to 5:1. As a bedside RN who has practiced for 12 years in 3 different states--one state with a 5:1 cap on nurse-patient ratio, one state with 4:1 cap, and one state with NO cap--I testify that safety of patients and mental health of nurses would be significantly compromised by this increase.

Adding one more patient to a nurse's assignment may appear negligible from the outside, but it is not. Four patients is already challenging to handle, even for an experienced nurse: it is four medical histories to learn, four families to communicate with, four sets of diagnostic and laboratory results to review, four sets of orders to learn and implement, four rotating sets of medication to pass, four patients to walk, turn, feed, toilet, bathe, entertain when bored, distract when restless, console when frightened or sad.

For reasons I don't fully understand, but know to be true, the complexity and stress multiply disproportionately when the number of patients goes from four to five. A nurse managing five patients is a frazzled nurse. Frazzled nurses don't have time to think critically or anticipate what may be coming next...they are forced to operate reactively. Frazzled nurses don't have time to properly educate patients and families about their treatments, medications, or plans of care. Frazzled nurses can't get to call bells or pain medicine on time and patients suffer, they can't respond to bed alarms quickly enough and patients fall, they can't find help to boost or turn a heavy patient, so they try to do it by themselves and get injured. Frazzled nurses forget things. Frazzled nurses make mistakes, because nurses are humans.

Please think about yourself or your loved one at their moment of need following surgery, a car accident, an infection. Would you want a frazzled nurse to take care of you?