



Opposing Nursing Staffing Ratios

The Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders (PONL) represents over 400 nurse executives and managers throughout the state of Pennsylvania. As leaders in Pennsylvania hospitals and healthcare organizations, we are committed to the highest level of patient safety and we know good staffing decisions are at the core of safe and effective patient care.

NURSE STAFFING IS COMPLEX. “Staffing effectiveness is determined by how well decision-makers understand the organization’s staffing model, standards, and policies, whether they have access to current research on safe staffing, and the accuracy and currency of information available to them about patients, caregivers and the environment. Staffing structures that serve this purpose best are developed collaboratively, and the agreed upon framework reflects the organization’s commitment to safe and effective patient care, a satisfied workforce and fiscal responsibility for the organization and society as a whole.”¹

NURSE STAFFING SHOULD NOT BE REDUCED TO A RATIO.

PONL is dedicated to supporting patient safety, quality and the viability of Pennsylvania hospitals and therefore opposes any legislation that includes mandated staffing ratios. PONL urges you oppose HB 147, SB 689, SB 742 and S 54.

WE base our opposition on the following:

- There is limited evidence that mandated ratios improve patient outcomes.
- Direct care staff already have input into staffing decisions on a daily basis. Mandating ratios removes that input and the ability to deploy staff based on patient need.
- Staffing decisions need to be based on evidence, including patient need, the skill level of staff, the geography of units, the availability of technology and support staff, and multiple other factors. It is a complex issue that can’t be addressed with mandates.
- All hospitals are not equal in terms of patient acuity. Mandating that all hospitals meet the same requirement has the potential for pulling professional nurses away from patients who need them the most.
- Any unfunded mandate, particularly mandated staffing ratios, have the potential for creating an even worse financial crisis for already struggling hospitals.

- There is no evidence that mandated staffing ratios will solve the nursing shortage.
 - (1) *Excellence and Evidence in Staffing Roundtable Report*, March 10, 2008, Concerro, Inc., hosted by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (AACN) and Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI).

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