

MAINE » LD 1639

The Maine Quality Care Act

Sponsor: **Senator Stacy Brenner**

Low Nurse Staffing Levels are Extremely Dangerous to Patients

- » Maine has no law limiting the number of patients a registered nurse (RN) can care for at one time. As a result, registered nurses are consistently required to care for more patients than is safe, compromising patient care and negatively impacting patient outcomes.
- » Poor staffing endangers patients and drives nurses from the profession. This legislation would protect patients and improve health care by limiting the number of patients that can be assigned to a registered nurse, appropriately broken down by patient care area and designed to ensure safe and effective patient care.

Safe RN-to-Patient Ratios Save Lives

- » A 2021 study found that each additional patient per nurse is associated with 12% higher odds of in-hospital mortality, 7% higher odds of 60-day mortality, 7% higher odds of 60-day readmission, and longer lengths of stay, even after accounting for patient and hospital covariates including hospital adherence to sepsis bundles.”¹
- » A 2021 study found that “disparities in [in-hospital cardiac arrest] survival between black and white patients may be linked to the level of medical-surgical nurse staffing in the hospitals in which they receive care...”² The study also found “that the benefit of being admitted to hospitals with better staffing may be especially pronounced for black patients.”³
- » Another key study found that if New Jersey and Pennsylvania matched California’s RN patient limits in medical-surgical units, New Jersey would have 13.9 percent fewer patient deaths and Pennsylvania would have 10.6 percent fewer deaths.⁴

Safe RN-to-Patient Ratios Keep Nurses at the Bedside

- » A 2016 Texas Center for Nursing Workforce study on hospital nurse staffing vacancy and turnover rates for registered nurses showed that RN turnover rates in California were dramatically lower than in Florida, New York, and Texas.⁵
- » A 2015 study comparing occupational injury and illness rates before and after the California RN staffing ratios law was passed found that the law was associated with a 31.6 percent reduction in occupational injuries and illnesses among RNs working in hospitals in California.⁶



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LD 1639, The Maine Quality Care Act

- » Establishes mandated minimum RN staffing ratios that require additional staffing based on individual patient care needs.
- » Safeguards nurses' right to advocate in exclusive interests of the patients under their care.
- » Protects nurse whistleblowers who speak out about assignments that are unsafe for the patient or nurse.
- » Requires hospitals to post notices on minimum ratios and maintain records on staffing.
- » Authorizes the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to enforce RN-to-patient limits.

Sources »

- 1 Lasater K.B., et al. Evaluation of hospital nurse-to-patient staffing ratios and sepsis bundles on patient outcomes. *Am J Infect Control*. 2021 Jul;49(7):868-873. doi: 10.1016/j.ajic.2020.12.002. Epub 2020 Dec 10. PMID: 33309843; PMCID: PMC8190185.
- 2 Carthon, M. B., et al. 2021. Better nurse staffing is associated with survival for Black patients and diminishes racial disparities in survival after in-hospital cardiac arrests. *Medical care*, 59(2), 169.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Aiken L., et al. 2010. Implications of the California Nurse Staffing Mandate for Other States. *Health Services Research*. 45(4):204-21. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-6773.2010.01114.x>.
- 5 Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies. 2016. Hospital Nurse Staffing Study. https://www.dshs.texas.gov/chs/cnws/HNSS/2016/2016_HNSS_Vacancy-and-Turnover.pdf.
- 6 Leigh, J. P., et al. 2015 California's Nurse-to-Patient Ratios Law and Occupational Injury. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 88(4) (pp. 477-484).



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