#

Unsafe Hospital Nurse to Patient Ratios

Angel Hobbs

King University

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Governor’s Office Bill Lee, Governor Karen A. Hobbs BSN, RN

State Capital, 1st Floor 159 Knights 1 Rd.

600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd. Rogersville, Tn. 37857

Nashville, Tn. 37243 (865) 712-9089

Dear Governor Lee,

I am writing you on behalf of the urgent need to put into place a safe nurse to patient ratio model for all healthcare facilities in Tennessee. Due to the nursing shortage, nurse to patient ratios have become unsafe and pose serious health outcomes to patients admitted as in-patients in hospitals.

RNs across the United States are working diligently to enforce a mandated safe nurse to patient ratio. I too, feel the need for a safe staffing ratio, not only to improve the quality of care for patients, but to improve patient outcomes as well. According to the IOM: Future of Nursing report, provided by the ANA (2019), “Staff shortages brought about by cost-cutting decisions, an aging population, increased patient complexity and need, and an aging workforce places stress on working conditions for nurses and affects patient care and overall outcomes.”

For decades, nurses have collected evidenced based practice to show that unsafe nurse to patient ratios effect the overall outcome of patient care. Not only does caring for too many patients risk unsafe conditions, it risk patients’ lives.

Currently, California is the only state with safe nurse to patient ratios. Something must be done. More and more nurses are finding different careers and leaving healthcare altogether. Not to mention the stress and burnout that nurses face every day.

“The Nurse Staffing Standards for Hospital Patient Safety and Quality Care Act ([S.1063](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1063)) (Brown) seeks to mandate nurse to patient ratios, especially in acute care situations. The act also seeks to empower nurses by obligating RNs to act in the best interest of the patient and advocate for patients without regard to bureaucratic and budgetary concerns of fear of being reprimanded for putting the patient first” (Blitchok, 2020).

“The Nurse Staffing Standards for Hospital Patient Safety and Quality Care Act ([H.R.2392](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2392?r=9)) (Schakowsky) also recognizes the fact that nurses are often put into difficult situations where they are pressured to care for too many patients, which results in poorer care overall. The bill seeks to remove these external pressures and allow nurses and patients to benefit from safe care ratios. In addition, the bill is designed to clearly dictate that nurses should always put the well-being of the patient above all other concerns” (Blitchok, 2020).

These two federally regulated acts can improve nurse to patient ratios and improve patient safety and outcomes. I propose for Tennessee to pass this bill of legislation and improve the nursing shortage, making Tennessee a desirable place to work in healthcare.

Thank you for your time and patience, and may God continue to bless you and your family.

Sincerely,

Karen A. Hobbs

References

Blitchok, A. (2020). Proposed Federal RN Ratios - What You Can Do About It. Retrieved 4 September 2020, from https://nurse.org/articles/federal-staffing-ratios/#:~:text=Current%20Legislation&text=The%20Nurse%20Staffing%20Standards%20for,especially%20in%20acute%20care%20situations.

IOM Future of Nursing Report. (2019). Retrieved 4 September 2020, from https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/iom-future-of-nursing-report