September 24, 2019

Senator Joanne M. Comerford  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 70 C  
Boston, MA  02133

Representative John J. Mahoney  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 130  
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Dear Senator Comerford, Representative Mahoney and members of the Joint Committee on Public Health,

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This ballot initiative fostered a dialogue between nurses, hospitals, and consumers to examine healthcare in a different way. The issue of safe staffing has always been challenging to standardize given the innumerable variables in hospitals and healthcare. Appropriate nurse staffing is vital to overall patient outcomes, including, decreased adverse events, decreased readmissions and patient satisfaction. What was learned this past year is that nurses and patients do not want rigid ratios and that one size does not fit all.

A critical lesson learned by the citizens of the Commonwealth from the ballot initiative that prompted the call to action for this commission is that California is the only state with mandated nurse:patient staffing ratios in all acute care hospital units. After an extensive analysis, the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission concluded “There was no systematic improvement in patient outcomes post-implementation of ratios” in California. The major impact seen was the increase in nursing satisfaction levels. Other states that have tried to implement a mandated ratios approach have also been
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The establishment of a Commission to examine staffing principles is the best way to actualize the statements from the Institute of Medicine’s Future of Nursing report\(^5\) which states that nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and experience, and be full partners along with physicians and other health care professionals in redesigning health care in the United States.
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