July 5, 2023

Joint Committee on Public Health
Senator Julian Cyr, Chair  
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Boston, MA 02133  
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Representative Marjorie C. Decker  
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Room 167  
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Re H 2213/S1404 An Act Relative to Acute Hospital Governance

Dear Chair Cyr, Chair Decker, and members of the Joint Committee on Public Health:

The American Nurses Association Massachusetts, Inc.(ANAMASS) would like to go on record in support of H 2213/S1404 An Act Relative to Acute Hospital Governance. This legislation mandates the establishment of at least 1 REGISTERED NURSE member with full voting rights and privileges on the board of directors/trustees (the board) of all acute care facilities of the Commonwealth. A Registered Nurse on the hospital board will ensure that the Chief Executive and hospital leaders will benefit from the insights, knowledge and experience of the largest working group in their organization. ANA Massachusetts is the largest voluntary professional nursing organization for nurses across all settings in the Commonwealth.

We urge you to pass this bill because:

- The majority of hospital care IS nursing care; nurses are with patients 24-7 and are the backbone of health care;
- There are more nurses in the healthcare workforce than any other profession so they can contribute unique insights and perspectives on patient care and how to improve hospital services;
- Gallup polls consistently rate nurses as the most trustworthy of all other professional groups¹

Hospital boards oversee the management of the hospital, influence corporate strategy, manage the workforce and are accountable to ensuring that the institution meets the standards of care. Today’s nurses have significant expertise in the areas of quality care, patient safety, healthcare administration and business management. Nurses, as crucial stakeholders for the success of any
hospital, have valuable insight into the attitudes of the hospital’s largest employee sector.

Nurses fiercely advocate for the physical, psychological, and spiritual health needs of patients and families in the community. They have detailed knowledge of overall standards of care, evidence-based practice, and innovation within the healthcare delivery system. Nurses know how to create a work environment that leads to higher retention rates for staff nurses…especially important during the current nursing shortage. Yet, most hospitals in the Commonwealth do not have a nurse on their Board.

Putting nurses on decision making Boards is not a new concept. The Nurses on Boards Coalition (NOBC) was developed in 2014, as a result of the recommendations made in the 2010 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health. The IOM encouraged using the valuable insights of nurses by adding them to hospital Boards to ensure quality of health safety in the community.2

There are also national and international legislative precedents in industry and manufacturing which support the premise of this legislation. In industry, a study by Freeman & Lazear (1995)3 found that “increased worker voice can allow more effective information transfer from board to worker, which reduces monitoring costs, creates motivation for workers...” In her paper, Worker Representation on U.S. Corporate Boards, posted on the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, Lenore Palladino explores the policy choices that led to increases worker representation on corporate boards4. There have also been several legislative initiatives to require worker representation on corporate boards at the federal level.

- The Reward Work Act proposed that workers elect one-third of board seats5
- The Accountable Capitalism Act mandates that 40% of board seats be elected by employees. 6

A study by Jäger, Schoefer, and Heining7 shows that Germany has included workers on corporate boards for over 70 years, and their research shows that workers being given a greater voice in the workplace leads to positive outcomes for the company such as improved worker productivity, worker retention and team work.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation has increasingly focused on health care leaders engaging their board members in quality and safety initiatives. Nurses are on the front lines in developing strategies for excellence in quality care and
patient safety, leading to improved patient outcomes. And THAT positively impacts the hospital’s bottom line and reputation.

Lastly and most important, nurses are bound to a Code of Ethics, perhaps unlike other members of the Board, to put patients and communities first and to promote and advocate for and protect the rights, health, and safety of patients. Thank you for considering this bill.

With Regards,

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2 About: Our Story. Nurses on Boards Coalition. https://www.nursesonboardscoalition.org/about/

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