An Act establishing a special commission on quality patient outcomes and professional nursing practice


This legislation is asking for the development of a multi-stakeholder commission to examine the variety of staffing systems in hospitals across the country and make regulatory, policy, and legislative recommendations as to the best way to care for Massachusetts residents and recruit and retain nursing staff.

For the last several decades, the issue of optimal nurse staffing has been a seemingly unsurmountable challenge. Stakeholders remain divided on how to approach this problem, but the situation will only get worse as our population continues to age and the demand for adequate nursing care increases. Previous efforts to legislate mandatory nurse:patient ratios and the divisive attempt at a voter mandate (2018) have been unsuccessful.

It is time to admit that we need a collaborative commission of specific organizations comprised of legislators, nurses, hospital executives, and patients who can collaborate to solve this ongoing and complex issue: how best to match patient care needs with the nurses required to care for them.

Without question, nurses and hospital administrators want to provide high quality care to patients but have yet to find a workable solution. Nurses who are satisfied with their work and practice in an environment where they can provide safe and effective nursing care will increase nursing staff retention, especially important in this time of a critical nurse shortage.

Stakeholders must come together to discuss and develop flexible staffing approaches to meet the needs of the populations served. The divisive atmosphere in many hospitals only exacerbates the problem, rather than developing workable solutions. Stakeholders MUST work together to find workable solutions which:

- Examine evidence-based, tested, and validated research on patient care quality outcomes relative to nurse staffing levels.
- Examine evidence-based, tested, and validated research on appropriate staffing levels for all units within a hospital.
- Examine approaches undertaken by other states by statute or regulation to address patient safety and patient quality outcomes relative to nurse staffing.
- Examine any barriers to reasonable and efficient enforcement of staffing standards adopted in other jurisdictions.
- Develop strategies for collaborative practice among registered nurses and other members of the healthcare team.
- Hold public hearings on at least an annual basis and meetings to accept comment from the general public and to seek advice from experts, including but not limited to the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing.
- Submit an annual report to the legislature as provided in subsection (e) on the state of hospital staffing in the Commonwealth.

ANA Massachusetts is the largest voluntary member professional organization for all nurses in the Commonwealth.