

## Pennsylvania's Nurses Are More Than a Number

Across Pennsylvania and the nation, there are not enough qualified health care professionals to meet our growing need for care. The commonwealth must invest in growing the health care workforce. One-size-fits-all, government mandates put up barriers between caregivers and patients.

### Mandating staffing ratios is not the answer.

- Government-mandated ratios do not produce more nurses to care for Pennsylvanians.
- When workforce shortages make it impossible for hospitals to meet the mandates, they will be forced to close beds or reduce services to comply with state law. Emergency room waits will increase and access to care will decrease in many communities.
- Health care teams make complex, real-time, evidence-based decisions to best care for patients. Rigid, government-mandated ratios replace this professional judgment, reduce these complex decisions to out-of-context numbers, and put treatment processes in the hands of the government.

### Only California mandates nurse ratios hospital-wide. Its law:

- **Has hurt [access to care](#).** California patients have fewer services, longer emergency department wait times, and higher costs than before the mandate.
- **Has not improved care.** California's outcomes do not consistently rank higher than other states. Pennsylvania already performs better in [overall health care quality](#) as well as several quality indicators tied to nursing.
- **Has not eased workforce shortages.** As of June 2023, California has the highest demand for travel nurses among states. Pennsylvania has the fifth-highest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>According to Qualivis

### Pennsylvania Hospital Staff Vacancy Rates



42% medical assistants



33% respiratory therapists



32% nurse practitioners



32% nursing support staff



31% registered nurses

Source: HAP, "Addressing Member Hospital Workforce Needs," 2023

**HAP supports a comprehensive strategy to sustain and grow the health care workforce that:**

- Makes health care education more affordable and accessible by funding scholarships, expanding loan forgiveness, investing in health care education programs, and offering incentives for clinicians to work as health care faculty and preceptors.
- Helps clinicians quickly get to work by addressing licensing delays and administrative barriers.
- Invests in and strengthens protections for health care workforce safety.
- Promotes careers in nursing, fosters a more diverse and equitable health care workforce, and supports career advancement for health care professionals.
- Encourages innovative care models, technology, and benefits that improve work/life harmony.
- Empowers providers to spend more time and energy caring for patients and practicing at the top of their license and training.
- Prioritizes these efforts by establishing a health care workforce council that coordinates across state agencies.

**Health care takes a team**



Delivering safe and high-quality care is about more than putting a number on nurses. Many hospitals today have shifted to team-based approaches to care that empower nurses to more effectively focus on the most important part of their job: Caring for patients.

Modern care teams bring together many types of health care professionals to:

- Make the best use of professionals' skills and training
- Offer flexible care to best meet each patient's needs

**Pennsylvania's workforce shortage is among the most severe in the nation. Why?**

- An aging and retiring health care workforce
- Too few educators and clinical training opportunities for health care professionals
- Too few graduates of nursing and health care education programs
- Bedside nurses expanding to advanced practice opportunities
- More patients who need acute care
- Stress, family obligations, and other life changes stemming from the pandemic

See online fact sheet for links to data sources <http://bit.ly/3kVuoZ4>