



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

February 10, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Rapp
Chair, Health Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
House Box 202065
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2065

The Honorable Dan Frankel
Democratic Chair, Health Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
House Box 202023
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2023

Dear Honorable Leaders of the House Health Committee:

On behalf of more than 240 members statewide, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) writes today to express its profound concern about House Bill 106, known as the "Patient Safety Act."

As you know, the proposal for and debate surrounding nurse staffing ratios has been active in Harrisburg for a number of years. It's a complex issue, with merits on both sides of the matter. HAP has consistently articulated our concerns about the effectiveness of one-size-fits-all approaches and the strong possibility for unintended outcomes, among other factors. We will not restate them here because, frankly, there is a much more pressing concern about considering this bill at this time. The reality is:

There are simply not enough nurses.

Rigid nurse-to-patient ratios will only intensify the challenges hospitals are facing in their attempts to fill open nursing positions and further exacerbate the staffing crisis along the entire continuum of care. According to a December 2021 HAP survey of Pennsylvania hospitals, current vacancy rates among a number of nursing professions are staggering:

- 45.5 percent for nursing support (CNA, PCA, NA)
- 40 percent for clinical nurse specialists (CNS)
- 28.6 percent for certified registered nurse practitioners (CRNP)
- 27 percent for staff RNs providing direct patient care
- 20.8 percent for certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNA)



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We thank you for the recent, significant, and bipartisan support for front-line hospital workers, including additional funds for nurse student loan forgiveness. HAP strongly urges you to continue to focus Pennsylvania's public policy efforts on finding and implementing solutions that can increase the number of qualified nurses in Pennsylvania.

We support a number of measures already in process in the General Assembly, including but not limited to:

- Easing licensing requirements for veterans and spouses to transition into health care careers
- Allowing international nurse graduates to sit for Pennsylvania's registered nurse exam
- Fully operationalizing already authorized participation in the interstate nurse compact
- Supporting state system and community college students who pursue health care careers

HAP and its Health Care Talent Task Force also stand ready to assist you in identifying other measures that can effectively provide sustainable solutions to this nursing crisis—including increasing capacity and flexibility for clinical education, for example. Please call on us.

Pennsylvania's nurses and patients deserve our best efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Heather Tyler'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Tyler
Vice President
State Legislative Advocacy