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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2697

My partner has been a nurse for nearly 10 years, most of which she's spent working in the Pediatric ICU. The numbers reflect everything I've heard from her over the past three years, nearly 30% of nurses quit in 2022, another third say they intend to quit in 2023. The "nursing shortage" is nothing new but these crises are compounding and the reality is, if there are no nurses there is no healthcare.

Safe staffing ratios are a critical element of this problem. Ensuring safe ratios is absolutely an issue of patient safety, decades of studies have proven conclusively that safe staffing ratios save lives. It is also critical to the mental and physical health of our nurses. Unsafe ratios are dangerous in the moment, but more than that they contribute to ever increasing levels of mental distress. Nurses are ultimately left with a choice; continue to work under unsafe and unsustainable conditions or leave healthcare altogether.

Addressing this problem requires not only hiring more nurses but also increasing support, both mental and material, in order to retain experienced nurses who are more vital than ever in the current healthcare crisis. The only justification for opposing safer staffing and better support for nurses is greed on the part of hospital management. It is clear that a safer working environment along with compensation that reflects the absolutely vital service that nurses provide would be a crucial first step in solving the staffing crises and addressing the myriad critical problems with our healthcare system. The money is there and hospital executives must be compelled to provide safe environments for both nurses and patients.