

Written Testimony of
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Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee
Public Hearing on the Health Care Staffing Crisis
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Good morning, Representative Mehaffie, and members of the Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee. My name is Jen Partyka. I am a wife, a mother of three, and a registered nurse. I have taken care of patients in northeast Pennsylvania for nearly 27 years.

I've worked in the ER, ICU, and many other hospital units. I was an educator for 10 years and worked as a school nurse in Scranton. I serve on the executive board of the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association. I am a PSNA Legislative Ambassador Captain. And I am vice-chair of the PSNA Political Action Committee. I'm very proud to be a nurse and it is my honor to serve patients and be a member of our nation's most trusted profession.

As you know, nurses are hard-working and altruistic. Nurse advocacy often translates directly into patient advocacy as we help patients make informed decisions, create and support initiatives to protect patients, and lobby for legislation on issues that directly impact our patients.

While nurses tirelessly serve and protect our patients, we – as nurses – do not have the support to address our needs. Sadly, many nurses now dread – and sometimes fear – coming to work. It's not uncommon for my colleagues and me to get high heart rate alerts on our smart watches as we drive to start a shift. **So, as we care for our patients – who is protecting the protectors? Are nurses standing alone?** The time is long overdue to find a solution to care for and show **respect** for nurses, especially as our nation faces the worst nurse staffing crisis in history.

Study after study shows that many nurses are leaving the profession and suffer from anxiety. They are leaving for a variety of reasons – **but staffing is always the number one issue**. Last month, an article noted that one in five healthcare workers have left the profession since March 2020. Staffing conditions are directly related to the individual nurse’s mental health and, therefore, the quality of care.

Poor staffing conditions existed before the pandemic and are now exacerbated by the current conditions and as Baby Boomers near retirement. In 2017, we knew that our nation would be short one million nurses by 2022 if we failed to create opportunities to support new nurses and employ them in our healthcare systems.

Did you know that entire hospital units, long-term care units, and acute care units are closed because there are no nurses to staff these units?

Did you know that patients may live in the ER for days if the hospital has already reached capacity?

Nurses are at their breaking point with increasing patient loads and record turnover. I’ve talked with my colleagues about our fears that we aren’t able to provide a level of care that our patients expect and deserve. **We’re tired. We’re worried. And we need your help.**

Some nurse executives may tell you the staffing answer lies in having nurses do more with less. But that is not the solution. According to Linda Aiken, a nurse researcher at UPenn, each additional patient per nurse was associated with a seven percent increase in the likelihood of dying within 30 days of admission and a seven percent increase in the odds of failure to rescue. **Is this what you would want for you and your family?** We need more nurses to safely care for the number of patients we're experiencing now and in the future of our organizations.

How do we keep nurses at the bedside? If hospitals cannot attract and retain experienced, skilled nurses, care will be compromised. One of the steps to attracting and retaining nurses is to ensure that there are an adequate number of nurses per patient within our organization. It is your job as an elected official to keep your constituents safe. And you can do that today by supporting the Patient Safety Act, House Bill 106 and Senate Bill 240. This legislation is a first step in ending the 20-month nightmare nurses have been experiencing on the front lines. Again, **do your part** and co-sponsor the Patient Safety Act, House Bill 106 and Senate Bill 240.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to answer any questions.