March 29th, 2023

Chair Liebling

Minnesota House of Representatives

Minnesota State Office Building 100

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Liebling and members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

My name is Kiersten Price. I am a registered nurse, and I am writing to you today to stress the dire need nurses have for your intervention in the unsafe staffing levels we have throughout hospitals in the state. I have been working in a hospital setting for 10 years now, with my most recent position being in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Minneapolis.

I am a recent transplant from California where robust laws around nurse staffing levels have been in place for more than 20 years. In my time working as a bedside nurse in California, not only could I care for my patients in a humane and dignified way, but never once did I feel as if I was at risk of losing my license due to unsafe patient assignments. Since moving to Minnesota, however, I am concerned by what I have witnessed regarding unsafe staffing, and the effects that it has had on the patients I care for and the nurses that I work alongside.

During my time in Minnesota, there have been countless unsafe situations that could have resulted in sentinel events, which is a patient event that results in death, permanent harm, or severe temporary harm. These situations include times when nurses had to take on more patients than what is medically safe, leaving us to put our licenses on the line, and worst of all, our patients' lives at risk. In my hospital, there are instances when charge nurses have to take patient assignments but are also required to respond to unexpected cardiac or respiratory arrests across the hospital, leaving their patients without a nurse to care for them.

Often, patients are left without the care they deserve, or a nurse is forced to miss their only lunch break in a 12-hour period due to a lack of staffing. Sadly, I’d say that it’s become the norm. If you wonder why nurses are leaving the bedside in droves, look no further than the crushing feeling of the inability to provide safe and humane care to patients during their most vulnerable and life-threatening moments.

One of the primary goals of the Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act is to address the crisis of under-staffing in Minnesota hospitals starting with the establishment of nurse staffing committees and the ability to have a meaningful voice in what safe patient care looks like in our hospitals. If you feel or expect that patients deserve a high standard of care, then you need to act now. In keeping the provisions of the Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act in the omnibus bill, you will demonstrate to your constituents that they deserve to be taken care of with dignity and respect, and at the end of the day keep more nurses in roles of care.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Price