



March 14, 2023

Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and the 6,300 employers and more than 500,000 employees we represent, I am writing to express our concerns with HF 1700 (Feist).

This bill would place a significant burden on Minnesota's hospitals and health systems that have been operating for three years under extremely challenging times. It would also set a disturbing precedent in workplace management – establishing a state mandate that the staffing of a work site be set by a committee. Under the bill, this staffing committee is not advisory. It is given the authority to establish the number of employees at work, in this instance the number of Registered Nurses. These are decisions that are made on a daily basis by Chief Medical Officers and Chief Nursing Officers and, at a higher level, with employees through collective bargaining. The legislature should not upend an employer's decisions about staffing by requiring that those decisions be made by a legislatively mandated committee.

The bill is also overly punitive and may lead to unintended consequences for Minnesotans across the state. All of us depend on hospitals and health systems for the delivery of health care services. However, this bill's mandates on hospital operations could lead to rising costs, longer wait times, and the reduction of available health care services in a given community. If a hospital is not able to accept and treat a patient while adhering to the required staffing plan, patients would likely be turned away.

There is no industry or community in the state where Minnesota's workforce shortage is not a challenge. Employers are scrambling to retain and hire workers. To do so, they are offering increased wages and salaries, expanded leave benefits, remote working and more flexible work arrangements, customized training, tuition assistance, and childcare support. In much the same way, we know most hospitals and health systems are currently trying to hire more nurses, and wages are escalating. Despite these efforts, however, there are still over 5,000 open nursing positions in the state.

Establishing a rigid, mandated process for staffing hospitals will not help to address the workforce challenges the health care sector is facing. It is our hope that the legislature focuses on licensing and credentialing efforts that help ease this shortage, rather than an approach that further complicates operations and may decrease the availability of care.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bentley Graves", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Bentley Graves
Director, Health Care & Transportation Policy