



Massachusetts
Organization of
Nurse Executives

Talking Points

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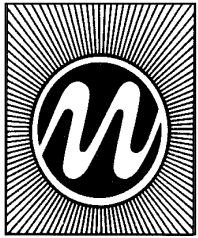
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MASSACHUSETTS ORGANIZATION OF NURSE EXECUTIVES MANDATED STAFFING RATIOS

- ◆ There are over 107,830¹ registered nurses in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) represents just 22,000 of these registered nurses. As nurse leaders, MONE members direct the activities of **all** nurses employed within healthcare facilities from the staff nurse at the bedside to the Chief Nursing Officer. Our nurse leaders are responsible for managing patient care and professional nursing services in hospitals and various practice settings throughout the state.
- ◆ **There are two competing bills on Beacon Hill that if passed, would have a profound impact on patient care and the nursing profession in Massachusetts.**
 - One, House Bill 2663, sponsored by a nurses' union, would set rigid, mandatory ratios that would determine how many patients a nurse can care for regardless of patient needs or the nurse's experience and education and would do nothing to address the shortage of nurses in Massachusetts;
 - **The Patient Safety Act, Senate Bill 1260, sponsored by the leading health care expert in the Legislature, Senator Richard Moore,** puts patients first and lets nurses decide what's best for patients to provide safe care and puts more nurses in Massachusetts hospitals by investing to expand nurse training and scholarship programs.
- ◆ **MONE believes the choice is clear – we support The Patient Safety Act** because staffing decisions require judgment, critical thinking and flexibility. Professional nurses are in the best position to assess their patients and determine their healthcare needs. You cannot substitute a number for a nurse's professional judgment.
- ◆ **National and local professional nursing organizations support the Patient Safety Act (Senate Bill 1260):** The American Nurses Association (ANA); the Massachusetts Association of Registered Nurses (MARN); the Home and Health Association of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Organization of Nurse Executives have all voiced their support for the Patient Safety Act.
- ◆ **The Patient Safety Act provides \$30 million for the Clara Barton Nursing Excellence Trust Fund to provide money for nursing scholarships, loan repayment programs and matching grants to hospitals for training nurses.** It also creates a mentoring program that would pair new nurses up with seasoned nurse mentors to assist their transition into the profession.
- ◆ **The ratio bill provides no funding for nursing scholarships, loans or mentors.** In fact, it remains silent on the need to fund and implement programs that would support the nursing profession and alleviate the well-documented nursing shortage.

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1 Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure website – FY 2002 Statistics – Licensees by Boards.



MONE

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- ◆ **MONE believes that focusing on retention efforts, partnering with schools to encourage careers in nursing, expanding capacity in nursing programs and funding nurse faculty positions are all positive alternatives to ratios that will address the short and long-term nursing workforce issues.** To that end, MONE is proud to be a collaborating partner with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education's Nursing Initiative.
- ◆ **We need to learn from the California Experience.** Even though government mandated ratios were signed into law in 1999, California has struggled with implementation of the ratios. Diversions have increased, surgeries have been cancelled. But most telling, not one other state has decided to adopt the ratio mandate since 1999.
- ◆ **Is Health Care Similar to Day Care? The nurses union thinks there is a comparison but let's take a closer look.**
 - **It is true that day care centers licensed in Massachusetts must comply with minimum ratios of staff to infants and children in their care. But, it is also true that when a day care program is full, they close their doors to new enrollments and start a waiting list.** Your child may or may not ever get into that day care center. Under the law, it is completely legal to be turned away, in fact, it is a common occurrence.
 - **Imagine going to your local hospital and being told that they have closed enrollment but they would be happy to put your name on a waiting list.** Unlike day care centers, hospitals must always accept patients and provide emergency care and treatment to you and your loved ones.
 - **Day care centers limit their hours of operation – typically 6AM to 6PM, Monday through Friday. It is a tightly controlled environment where the enrollment can be capped and the hours of operation are finite.** A hospital is a dynamic environment that must be open and ready to receive emergencies 24/7.
 - **The mission and the mandate that governs day centers and hospitals are very different.** Comparing hospital staffing to day care staffing makes a good sound bite for a radio ad but it just doesn't compare.
- ◆ **Hospitals do not use rigid ratios** but instead determine appropriate nurse staffing based on clinical judgment of nurses and the health care team and the individual patient needs.
- ◆ **There is no scientific evidence** that supports the claim that mandated, specific staffing ratios guarantee or ensure safe patient care in hospitals. All patients, all hospitals, all nurses are different and cannot be treated alike.
- ◆ **MONE believes we need to support nurses currently in the workforce and we need to address the future shortage of nurses by implementing concrete strategies to recruit and train new nurses.** The Patient Safety Act does that and is a far more effective approach to ensuring safe practice conditions for nurses.

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