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Massachusetts  
Organization of  
Nurse Executives

# Talking Points

## NURSE STAFFING DEBATE IN THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE JUNE 1, 2006

### **HOUSE BILL 4988 IS AN RN-FOCUSED RATIO BILL. GOVERNMENT SHOULD HOLD HOSPITALS ACCOUNTABLE FOR PATIENT CARE BUT NOT MICROMANAGE HOW THAT CARE IS DELIVERED**

- Hospitals did not and will not compromise on patient safety.
- Hospital caregiving teams needs the flexibility to design the right care for each patient.
- The House bill explicitly sets “limits” on RN staffing: *“The department shall develop nurse’s patient limits which represent the maximum number of patients to be safely assigned to each direct-care registered nurse at one time on a particular unit.”*
- The Secretary of Health and Human Services, which oversees DPH, strongly opposes the House ratio bill stating, “it may actually jeopardize the health and safety of patients...”
- This bill is about more jobs and higher wages for a union that represents one in five nurses at the expense of others on the caregiving team, - it’s not about patient safety.
- The right approach -- that doesn’t hurt patient care, the professionalism of nurses, or the care giving team is Senator Moore’s “Patient Safety Act.”

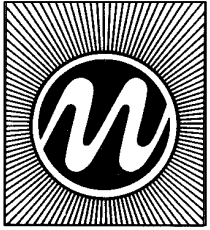
### **THIS IS A BAD BILL AT THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME – HOSPITALS SHOULD BE FOCUSING TIME AND RESOURCES ON IMPLEMENTING HEALTH REFORM**

- The Commonwealth just passed the most sweeping health reform legislation in the nation that will test the healthcare system.
- Now is no time to throw another major health care overhaul into the mix.
- Health reform was aimed at providing greater access to the uninsured...Ratios would do just the opposite – limit access, raise costs and jeopardize patient care.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF MANDATED RATIOS ARE REAL FOR PATIENTS, CAREGIVERS, HOSPITALS, AND COMMUNITIES**

- Mandated ratios will have a ripple effect throughout the health care system – and will wreak havoc not only on acute care hospitals, but specialty hospitals, nursing homes and other providers that have to compete for nurses.
- The legislature will force hospitals to lay-off other members of the care team to fill nurse ratios.
- It will set the nursing profession back 20 years, forcing nurses to perform duties that other team members now perform.
- In California, the only state to pass ratios, emergency room diversions increased 25%, 963 surgeries postponed in first six months, RN salaries increased faster than national average, 10 psych units closed, estimated cost \$1.5 billion.
- These are some of the reasons that leading health care and business organizations across the state oppose mandated ratios in any form and why every major daily newspaper that has editorialized on the issue strongly opposes the House ratio bill.

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## **MASSACHUSETTS HOSPITALS HAVE PROVEN THEIR LONGSTANDING AND CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO PATIENT SAFETY**

- Massachusetts hospitals are the first in the nation to **voluntarily** post staffing plans as part of *Patients First* initiative, and we will report on patient outcomes next year.
- Massachusetts hospitals co-founded the Mass. Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors and the Mass Quality Health Partnership. Have implemented initiatives that lead the nation such as reconciling medications, communicating critical test results, and establishing medication best practices.
- Massachusetts hospitals have signed on to IHI's "100,000 Lives Campaign", that adopts six interventions to reduce medical errors.
- Hospitals and nurse leaders have done more than compromise; they have backed bold changes to support nurses and improved patient care including: eliminating mandatory overtime in way that protects patients; limiting the length of nursing shifts; fines for failure to submit staffing plans...and more.

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