

February 17, 2020

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
STATE ADVOCACY ALERT**

SUBJECT: Contact Your State Legislators – Support IHA/ANA-IL Nurse Staffing Initiative and Oppose Mandatory Staffing Ratios

In a collaborative effort to improve quality and patient safety at hospitals across the state, the American Nurses Association-Illinois (ANA-IL) and the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) are supporting bipartisan legislation – “The Nurse Staffing Improvement Act of 2020” ([Senate Bill 3636](#)) – to strengthen the existing *Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act*. SB3636 is sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford. See a fact sheet from IHA and ANA-IL for details about the legislation ([click here](#)).

Meanwhile, proponents of mandatory nurse staffing ratios have re-introduced House Bill 2604, the same bill that was blocked in the spring 2019 legislative session. The bill is now on second reading in the House, and the bill’s sponsors may try to push for a floor vote in the near future. ANA-IL and IHA both strongly oppose HB2604.

ACTIONS REQUESTED:

- 1) Contact your state Senator and ask her/him to sign on as a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 3636.
- 2) Contact your state Representative and urge her/him to oppose and vote NO on any mandatory nurse staffing ratio proposal, including House Bill 2604.

To look up your Senator and Representative and their Springfield office contact information, [click here](#) (fill in the zip code box under “Find Politicians/Look Up and Contact Your Officials” in the right hand column of the webpage).

You can also send separate email messages to your Senator and Representative by [clicking here](#).

Suggested points for talking to your state Senator:

- I urge you to sign on as a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 3636, a bipartisan nurse staffing proposal to strengthen the state’s *Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act*. The bill is sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford.
- Our hospital/we strongly support this legislation because it will ensure that direct care nurses have a stronger voice in determining appropriate staffing levels at hospitals, based on the conditions and care needs (acuity) of their patients.
- Our hospital/we greatly value the work, commitment and compassion of our direct care nurses, and we continually work to provide the best work environment for nurses and quality care for patients.
- Senate Bill 3636 will provide a meaningful opportunity to improve quality and patient safety by advancing the partnership and collaboration between direct care nurses and hospitals across the state.
- This proposal also establishes clear mechanisms for transparency, enforcement and penalties to ensure that hospitals comply with safe staffing levels and standards.
- Key provisions of SB3636 include:
 - Each hospital’s Nursing Care Committee must be comprised of at least 55% direct care nurses and its Co-Chair must be a direct care nurse;
 - The Committee must produce a hospital-wide staffing plan, including inpatient emergency departments;
 - Require the Committee to meet at least twice per year (now annually), with reports and information from the committee to be provided to direct care nurses;

- Require a mechanism for nurses to report variations from the staffing plan and a process for such reports to be reviewed and addressed;
- Prohibit any retaliation for any employee who expresses a concern or complaint regarding a violation of the *Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act* or concerns related to nurse staffing;
- Authorize the Illinois Department of Public Health to enforce compliance of these requirements;
- To help address the nursing shortage, hospitals will provide \$2 million over the next four years for nurse scholarships to increase the number of new graduate nurses entering the profession.
- Please support and sign on as a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 3636.

Suggested points for talking to your state Representative:

- I urge you to vote NO or Present on House Bill 2604, which would impose unnecessary and unworkable mandatory nurse staffing ratios at hospitals.
- The Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) and the hospital community have tried to work in good faith with the ratio bill's sponsor and supporters and offered them an alternative compromise – strengthening the existing Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act – but that offer was rejected.
- Working collaboratively with the American Nurses Association-Illinois (ANA-IL), IHA and the hospital community support a bipartisan legislative proposal on strengthening the Acuity Act – Senate Bill 3636.
- SB3636 will ensure that direct care nurses have a stronger voice in the staffing process and that nurses and supervisors collaborate on determining appropriate staffing levels at hospitals, based on the conditions and care needs (acuity) of their patients.
- There is no conclusive evidence that imposing mandatory nurse staffing ratios will improve quality or patient outcomes; Illinois outperforms California – the only state in the U.S. to enact nurse staffing ratios – in several quality metrics.
- A one-size-fits-all numerical approach to staffing takes away flexibility and decision-making autonomy from the healthcare professionals at my hospital.
- The nurse leaders and direct care nurses at my LOCAL hospital – who have extensive training, experience and knowledge – should be the ones making decisions for my hospital on how best to provide high quality care to our patients 24/7/365. These critical decisions made every day at my hospital – minute-by-minute and hour-by-hour – are best handled at the LOCAL level.
- Nurse staffing ratios will drive up healthcare costs in Illinois by at least \$2 billion a year – for patients, families, employers and hospitals. My hospital simply cannot absorb the substantial, additional costs from nurse staffing ratios.
- Having to hire many more registered nurses to meet the ratios will lead to staffing cuts in other areas including support staff.
- Nurse staffing ratios could force my hospital to reduce or eliminate services, like behavioral health, or go on emergency bypass when we do not have enough nurses to meet the ratios, e.g., when there is a sudden influx of patients in the Emergency Department or a specific unit.
- The state faces a regional nursing shortage and will lose one-third of the nurse workforce to retirement in the next five years; Illinois does not have enough nurses to meet the ratio mandates. Staffing ratios will only exacerbate the nursing shortage.
- Please vote No or Present on House Bill 2604 or any other mandatory nurse staffing ratio proposal.