

Testimony of Timothy Berard, RN
Public Health Committee
March 15, 2013

SB 968 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels

Good Morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Tim Berard. I am a nurse at the UConn Health Center John Dempsy Hospital.

I am here today to support SB 968 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels. I didn't always work at the Health Center. For years I worked at Rockville General Hospital on Bissel 2 the medical surgical floor. I worked nights and often I felt like our staffing was based on the idea that all the patients would be sleeping. As anyone who has had a hospital stay knows, very little sleeping happens in a hospital. Our hospitals are around the clock operations and our patients are more acutely sick than ever. They need constant monitoring and care. Staffing levels in hospitals can fluctuate wildly based on all sorts of factors but very rarely did I feel like we had enough staff to provide the kind of care we felt we should be providing.

I remember one night when I alone had eleven patients to cover.

When your patient load is so high, there is no time for crisis or the unexpected. I would have to hurry from patient to patient. Our nursing standards demand that we see every patient at least every hour. By the time I would finish with patient fourteen it would have been an hour since I saw patient number 1. You are forced to quickly start the process all over again. Keeping that many patients straight in your head takes all the concentration you can muster and even diligent charting is difficult. It is a scenario ripe for medication and patient care errors. It is a very unsafe environment for the patients and the nurse's license. Nurses are forced into these situations that put their license on the line every day. It becomes a rock and a hard place for nurses who can never walk away from the dangerous situation to the patients or to their license.

SB 968 will be a help. It won't fix all of the problems addressing staffing, we still need better, more interconnected computer systems and we need more study on the impact of acuity on staffing levels but it is a step in the right direction. At UConn we have a much more open and transparent system and it has helped us figure out new and improved ways to address staffing. The rest of the hospitals will see that reporting will lead to better care for all our patients and I know that is what they want.

Thank you