

Testimony of Dale Cunningham, 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 Dale Cunningham. I have been a practicing Registered Nurse since 1976. I have been employed by Lawrence & Memorial Hospital since December 1990 and worked as a staff RN in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I also have served on our Union Executive Committee since 2000 and have been a strong advocate for safe patient care by providing safe staffing here in Connecticut and throughout my career. I am here to ask for your support for SB 968.

Through evidence based research it has been proven in order to achieve the ability deliver adequate safe patient care you need safe staffing levels. With SB 968, we hope to require hospitals to disclose actual staffing levels where patient care is being performed. All governing bodies that oversee areas of specialty in Nursing all have suggested staffing guidelines. We are just asking that hospitals use these guidelines to implement safe staffing levels and then make these levels known to the patients they serve.

As a Neonatal Intensive Care nurse I work very closely with the whole family. Often, parents of my small patients ask how many babies are you caring for today. Parents of small infants and children want to know that their child will be well attended to in their absence. Through years of research our governing body NANN has recommended staffing guidance for safe patient care in all levels of neonatal care. One major reason for adequate staffing levels is because having them in place leads to decreased medication errors and rises in patient satisfaction.

In order to maintain adequate reimbursement, hospitals must receive good scores from HCAPS with changes in healthcare reimbursement. Staff has had increased responsibility over time with new measures, such as electronic documentation (EMR) and reporting of HAI's, which creates a need for adequate staffing levels to achieve the same goal - decreased patient care days and increased patient satisfaction. Investing in adequate staffing levels will benefit hospitals in the end because reimbursements will take place and not be withheld.

So in conclusion, SB 968, this bill will give the public an opportunity to see how a hospital provides staff to the area in which they may be utilizing services for their healthcare. This information will be in view also for future physicians and staff looking for employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.