

Testimony of Ellen Parpana
In Support of Raised Bill 968
An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels
March 15, 2013

I want to thank the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify on the need to report staffing levels to the Department of Public Health, Raised Bill 968. As a nurse for more than 22 years, I ask you to support this Bill. Nurses, patients and the general public can benefit from this reporting, because it will promote the proper staffing to care for patients at all Connecticut Hospitals.

At Danbury Hospital they staff by grids that are established by management. We have a staffing task force, set up by the Staffing Committee to address some of our concerns. But when staffing levels come up, they say, "this is the grid". Many times it is not enough.

One scenario the other night: 1 nurse to 5 patients, you'll think you'll have a good night, Big no, no!

In one room, there was a 90 year old that is on Lasix, which is a diuretic to make the patient urinate. Being elderly it is difficult to hold the bladder. The patient was consistently incontinent of large amount of urine. The pad/bed linen to be changed constantly to keep the patient dry and warm, and to be able to sleep in between and to prevent skin breakdown.

At the same time two patients in another room are calling and asking for pain medicines, and a patient in a third room, who needed assistance getting to the bedside commode, (also on Lasix) because of unsteadiness on their legs. Patient safety is an issue, constantly. Another confused patient, who's a "jumper, does not understand how to use the call bell in spite of reeducation. The bed alarm goes off constantly when the patient needs to urinate. Patient is on Lasix. Again, patient safety is an issue.

As a nurse, patients, who ask for pain medicine, should be the priority. But, in this scenario, safety is first on the line. Nurses have to make these priority decisions all the time. You might ask, where are those aides? They are busy answering other lights too, since they have 12 call bells assigned to them.

To have 6 patients or more, at night, is not safe. Listening to (report), looking at orders, checking vitals, laboratory results and medications to be given at midnight, takes more than an hour. And in between report, nursing assistant will be calling us nurses for other patient issues. I pray to God that nothing happens to my patients before I see them.

I have no doubt that this scenario happens at hospitals throughout the State. There are many articles about how safe staffing levels prevent injuries and infections, etc. I feel knowing what staffing levels each hospital has, will improve patient outcomes all over. Reimbursement is going to be based on outcomes. If there are good staffing levels, there will be good outcomes.

Please support Raised Bill 968, to help improve the care for the citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you,

Ellen Parpana, RN
12 June Road
New Milford, CT 06776