

Testimony of
Pam Carlson, RN
Danbury Nurses' Union, Unit #47 AFT Local 5047
In support of Raised HB5384
An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing levels
March 5, 2014

My name is Pam Carlson. I am a Registered Nurse at Danbury Hospital. I work on a high acuity in-patient medical/oncology unit at Danbury Hospital that is chronically understaffed with too few RN's and CNA's. The staffing is based on a "number grid" that refers only to the number of patients on the unit as opposed to acuity or acuteness of each individual patient's condition. This chronic understaffing puts patients at a much higher risk for safety and results in overall poorer quality of care. "Bedside RN's" are just that because we want to be at the bedside taking care of very ill patients. Understaffing is forcing us to be "reactive as opposed to proactive". Often times, nurses are putting in incidental overtime hours because of understaffing and have to spend hours after our shifts end to complete assessments and required charting that we are unable to complete during our normal shift hours. If we had appropriate staffing based on acuity, we could complete these tasks in a more timely manner without incurring overtime premiums.

At times, our unit will understaff a nurse's aide position and end up paying several nurses overtime when it would have been cheaper to have that one extra nurse's aide for an 8 hour shift at \$12 to \$14 dollars an hour! Quite frankly, I feel the hospitals are hiring too many administrators and not enough bedside staff. We end up with inadequate funds in the budget for appropriate patient care at the bedside. Inadequate staffing is making it difficult to impossible for staff to have time for required meal breaks during their shift. RN's are going 8 hours and more without a meal period or 15 minute breaks during their shift. I find this mind boggling when many other employers in the state follow the mandatory meal/break laws for their employees. Nurses give their hearts and souls to their work. Most of us are in this profession because we enjoy what we do and love working for our patients. However, the nursing profession is starting to lose excellent Registered Nurses because of fatigue, health issues related to their jobs, or plain and simple burnout. Your support for staffing disclosure will support the nursing professionals who are the backbone of healthcare and who only want to provide quality, safe, bedside care 24/7 to our patients who need us the most.

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Sent from my iPhone