

Testimony of
Marie Athans, 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 Marie Athans. I am a 30 year certified Behavioral Health Nurse and have worked at Danbury Hospital on the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift for my entire career. I am writing to support H.B. 5384, An Act Concerning reports of Nurse staffing levels. The nursing shortage is an atrocity and huge disservice to all patients. I have watched a well staffed and well run, safe and organized unit deteriorate to unsafe, chaotic and disorganized disarray.

I am on a 22 bed unit that serves the mentally ill, but also elderly, mentally retarded, traumatic brain injured and patients with substance abuse and medical issues. Our normal staffing is 2 R.N.'s and 1 tech or CNA/nurse's aide., but on a regular basis we need 4 staff either another RN or tech or nurse's aid. At times we are staffed with just 2 R.N.s on our two unit floor and when one is downstairs the other is left alone with the patients on the sleeping floor. There have been times that only one R.N. staffed the floor when the hospital could not get another R.N. When we do have 4 scheduled, it is common practice to send the 4th to work on another floor.

Additionally, since Danbury Hospital has taken away differentials and bonuses to non-union workers we cannot get anyone to stay for an extra or come in for an extra and we are consistently running short staffed or at a very, very unsafe staffing level that is not allowing nurses the time to monitor/assess/intervene with their patients, nor complete the required paper/computer work timely or accurately. With the high level of demand on the R.N., nursing judgment may be obscured.

All of these are contributing factors to nursing errors that can lead to a negative outcome for the patient as well as jeopardize safety to all. There are no nurses in the hospital that are cross trained to float to behavioral health at night.

All these issue are related to quality care and the Hospital should be held accountable. This is why I am asking you to support HB 5384.

Thank you,
Marie Athans
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