



*A Union of Professionals*

**AFT Healthcare** 

Testimony of

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Public Health Committee

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***SB 855 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels***

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee. I am Joanne Chapin, a staff nurse in Ambulatory Surgery at New Milford Hospital, President of the New Milford Hospital RNs and Jurisdictional VP of Healthcare for AFT Connecticut. AFT Connecticut proudly represents more than 7,000 healthcare professionals in 10 acute care hospitals

These positions give me a unique opportunity to see healthcare in Connecticut from all different levels. From the perspective of still being a bedside nurse to receiving monthly updates from our members working in hospitals throughout the State on staffing and patient safety.

In 2009 the Public Health Committee agreed with the importance of providing safe nurse staffing levels in Connecticut's acute care hospitals. It requested the hospitals to make available, upon request, a certified report that their prospective nurse staffing plans were adequate and appropriate for the delivery of patient care, but the statute did not make this information reportable to the public.

Since 2009 we have all learned through various studies and reports that adequate nurse staffing levels reduce medical errors, infections rates, patient falls and saves lives. In October 2014 the Connecticut Department of Public Health reported that the number of adverse events were climbing as positive patient outcomes were declining. The Centers for Disease Control reported that Connecticut has higher infection rates than the national average in three categories: catheter associated urinary tract infections, surgical site infections and Clostridium difficile infections. All infections that can be improved with better staffing levels.

This is happening as healthcare dollars become more scarce and bedside caregivers and support staff are being cut. Nursing departments are being told that they must "do more with less," jeopardizing patient safety and taxing the limits of healthcare workers.

Even the Connecticut Hospital Association acknowledged publically that better transparency and reporting will contribute to reduced errors and improved safety. We agree with them.

The lack of public reporting has given the hospitals little incentive to stick to a staffing plan that provides safe patient care. Staffing levels remain as much of an industry secret as they were a decade ago, leaving the public in the dark when it comes to choosing a hospital for themselves or their loved ones.

What is needed is public reporting of the true staffing levels to the Department of Public Health with this information being posted on the DPH and the individual hospitals websites. This information should be easy for the public to locate and for DPH to verify. This can be accomplished with no extra burdens placed on the institutions because this information is already available to them and could easily be passed on to DPH.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I urge you to support SB 855.

AFT Connecticut is also supporting:

SB 252 - An Act Concerning Reports of Infectious Diseases at Hospitals

HB 5325 - An Act Concerning Community Health Needs Assessments and For-Profit Hospitals

SB 110 - An Act Concerning A Study on Reports of Threats and Assaults Against Hospital Employees.