

MI NURSES Association

Affiliate of National Nurses United and AFL-CIO

The Safe Patient Care Act: *A plan to increase the safety of patients in Michigan hospitals and build and retain a strong nursing workforce.*

Problem: There is no law that limits the number of patients a **registered nurse** can be assigned to take care of in the hospital. This results in an alarming and unsafe variety of standards in Michigan hospitals. There is also no law to prevent hospitals from making nurses work unlimited hours (leading to shifts of 14, 16 or even 20 hours, often with little to no rest in between).

Too often, this means your nurse must juggle too many patients or work past the point of exhaustion. Nurses work hard and make every effort to provide quality care and protect patients from harm. But understaffing and overworking nurses is dangerous for patients (increased falls, infections, medication errors and even deaths).

Solution: The Michigan Safe Patient Care Act is a bipartisan package that addresses rampant RN understaffing and excessive forced RN overtime. It will force administrators to make decisions based on patients' needs, rather than misguided cost-cutting in the hospital industry.

Safe limits on RNs' patient assignments.

- Safe limits on the number of patients per nurse, based on national evidence-based standards, by unit (example: maximum of four patients per RN on a medical-surgical floor).
- Hospital must post information about the law and inform people on how to report violations.
- State runs a toll-free hotline to receive complaints.
Additional time for rural hospitals to comply.

Limits on forced overtime for RNs.

- Nurses can't be ordered to work more hours than scheduled.
- RNs can still volunteer for overtime, if any is needed, if they know they can provide safe care.
- RNs must have 8 continuous hours off after a shift of 12 hours or more, to rest.
- Nurses are protected from discipline, firing or losing their license if they refuse unplanned extended shifts.
- The limits will be suspended during emergency situations or when a nurse is in the middle of a critical patient procedure.

Hospital transparency.

- Hospitals must disclose to the public their actual RN-to-patient ratios, which are closely tied to patient outcomes, so consumers can make informed choices and everyone has real data to evaluate. There is currently no law requiring this transparency.