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Nurses from Across the PA Meet With Legislators, Hold Press Event/Rally at State Capitol to Highlight the Hospital Staffing Crisis and Urge Support for the Patient Safety Act

More than 100 frontline nurses from across the commonwealth gathered today at the state Capitol to alert legislators to the staffing crisis within their hospitals and to urge them to pass the Patient Safety Act to mandate safe nurse-to-patient ratios in all Pennsylvania hospitals.

Adopting a short-sighted and dangerous strategy, hospitals have tried for decades to save money by cutting nursing staff, endangering patients and forcing nurses out of hospitals and even out of the profession due to burnout. While the COVID crisis didn't create the problem, it greatly exacerbated it. Now nurses in Pennsylvania are dealing with a staffing crisis as well continuing the battle against COVID. Their numbers are, in some cases, at unprecedented lows and patient care is suffering.

"We have a law in Pennsylvania that limits the number of children who can be assigned to a childcare worker in daycare centers--why don't sick children have the same protection?" asks PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N. "We desperately need safe minimum staffing levels in our hospitals. When nurses are routinely required to care for more patients than is safe, it's called chronic nurse short-staffing, and it is a crisis for both patients and nurses."

When nurses have too many patients, patients don't get the care they need and nurses, overburdened with heavy patient loads and unable to provide their patients with attentive care because they can't be in five places at once, burn out quickly. Some even leave the profession.

"Every patient deserves to have a nurse at the bedside who isn't overloaded with care and tasks due to having too many patients," says Mary Adamson, R.N., an ICU nurse at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia and president of the Temple University Hospital Nurses Association. "Patients deserve the attention excellent, focused care takes, whatever that may be. When nurses miss signals because we are assigned too many patients and are spread too thin, patients don't do as well, and that should worry everyone in Pennsylvania."

The Patient Safety Act (House Bill 106 and Senate Bill 240) would correct this problem and improve care for all Pennsylvanians by mandating safe nurse-to-patient ratios, based on patient acuity, in hospitals across Pennsylvania.

"We have a lot of laws in Pennsylvania that are focused on public safety, like laws against drunk driving, but no standards at all for how many patients a nurse can have, and that can have

disastrous consequences for patients,” says Shannan Giambrone, R.N., a longtime ICU nurse at Suburban Community Hospital in Montgomery County, a member of PASNAP’s Executive Board and president of the Suburban General Nurses’ Association. “Unsafe staffing is like driving drunk. Sometimes, we all get home safe, but we’re at risk every single time. And the people of Pennsylvania deserve so much better than to have to absorb the risks associated with unsafe staffing.”

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth.