

Sen. Larson: Legislators, nurse professionals collaborate on the Nurse Staffing and Patient Protection Act

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MADISON, WI - On Wednesday, February 25, Sen. Chris Larson joined direct care nurses and the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals at the State Capitol for a press conference introducing the Nurse Staffing and Patient Protection Act. The bill, co-authored by Sen. Melissa Ratcliff, Rep. Francesca Hong, and Rep. Lisa Subeck, would set enforceable minimum staff to patient ratios in Wisconsin hospitals.

Senator Larson had this to say regarding the legislative effort: “Safe staffing saves lives - unsafe staffing ruins lives and ends careers.

“Wisconsin has a nursing shortage. By 2040, WI could be short as many as 19,000 nurses, according to a report published by the WI Department of Workforce Development. It’s not that people aren’t going into nursing - it’s that they’re leaving the field early.

“Nationwide, 138,000 nurses left the profession from 2022 to 2024, according to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. Besides retirement, the top 3 reasons nurse gave for leaving the field were: stress and burnout, workload, and understaffing. Our bill addresses all 3.”

In addition to the ratios, the bill includes a number of additional provisions designed to protect patients and support our nursing workforce, including:

Safe staffing levels

- Establishing statewide, enforceable minimum nurse-to-patient ratios and requiring each hospital to submit a staffing plan to DHS
- Requiring each hospital to create a nurse staffing committee to create their staffing plan, with at least a simple majority made up of non-supervisory direct-care registered nurses
- Mandating that hospitals submit to the Department of Health Services (DHS) and publicly post their nurse staffing plan
- Ensuring hospitals include support staff levels in their facility staffing plans that are informed by the direct care staff themselves

Fair labor practices

- Banning mandatory overtime (with very limited exceptions), providing a predictable schedule and improved work-life balance to our nursing workforce
- Allowing nurses to refuse any work assignment they believe in their own professional judgment would compromise patient safety or their nursing license
- Limiting the mandated length of any shift to 12 hours in any 24-hour period (employees could choose to work longer if they want)
- Forbidding any hospital from retaliating against a staff member who exercises any of the rights enumerated in the bill

Speaking at the press conference were the following:

- State Senator Chris Larson
- State Senator Melissa Ratcliff
- Connie Smith - President, Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (WFNHP)
- Dan Gage - Registered Nurse from Burlington
- Ruthie Malis - Hematology, Oncology, and Cellular Therapy Nurse

To access the bill draft and co-sponsor memo for this legislation, click the links below:

[Bill draft](#)

[Co-sponsor memo](#)