



September 19, 2023

The Honorable Senator Kim Ward, President Pro Tempore  
Pennsylvania Senate  
292 Main Capitol Building  
Senate Box 203039  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3039

RE: House Bill 106, "Patient Safety Act"

Dear Senator Ward:

On behalf of the 420 members of the Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber), I am writing to oppose House Bill 106, the "Patient Safety Act", which mandates nursing ratios as a measure to address the nursing shortage.

The Chamber firmly believes that hospitals and nursing leaders in Columbia and Montour Counties are strongly committed to safe and high-quality care for the people in our region. Moreover, when considering that each hospital is different and serves a diverse population, we are certain that local leadership knows best how to establish and manage staffing strategies.

This body of leaders tell us that they are making great strides in addressing the nursing shortage in innovative new ways, such as changing the delivery of care through pilot programs, the development of new care teams, leveraging the licenses and skillsets of existing staff, and embracing new technologies which support nursing efficiency. House Bill 106 threatens their great progress. Why?

With reports of a 37% vacancy rate across multiple campuses, they've assured us that compliance with mandated nursing ratios will force measures that will reduce beds and capacity, compromising access and timely care. Worse yet, state-wide, the shortage is too large to be truly addressed by such a mandate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections, registered nursing is listed among the top occupations in terms of job growth through 2029. The RN workforce is expected to grow from three million in 2019 to 3.3 million in 2029, an increase of 7%, and 1.1 million new registered nurses are needed to avoid a further shortage.

Locking into statute an RN-exclusive model is equivalent to plugging a cracking dam with one's finger, with the added negative of overturning innovative progress, adding financial burden and diminishing service for communities with rapidly growing healthcare needs. There is no doubt that patients being seen will experience better care – but how many units will be closed (or prevented from opening) due to inability to comply with such a mandate?

**THE CHAMBER**  
The Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce

Please do not ratify House Bill 106, and instead work with state agencies and members of the Shapiro Administration, the Senate, and the General Assembly to develop smart and innovative solutions to ensure continued access to care and alleviate the staffing shortages in healthcare.

Local healthcare leaders and frontline workers were declared afresh “heroes” just a few short years ago. Let us honor that sentiment by giving local leaders the tools to help them lead, instead of government mandates that will make our heroes’ jobs more difficult.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Berleth  
President

Cc:

Hon. Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver  
Hon. Representative Robert Leadbeter  
Hon. Representative Michael A. Stender