

**Ask:** To support HB-1401 WITH RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS from Colorado Nurses Association

**Purpose:** To provide information, backed by verified studies, that counteract disinformation about nurse staffing and implementation of minimum nurse staffing standards in hospitals

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**Myth: There aren't enough nurses.**

**Fact: We have plenty of nurses. Many nurses are just not willing to work in unsafe staffing conditions.**

- According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2020), 'As of December 31, 2019, the total number of active RN licenses in the United States was 4,948,914, an increase of 309,366 (6.7%), and active LPN/LVN licenses was 996,154, an increase of 20,166 (2.1%), compared to 2017.'

**Myth: Implementation of nurse staffing standards doesn't address workforce development.**

**Fact: Nurse staffing standards would significantly help to RECRUIT and RETAIN nurses in Colorado.**

- After the implementation of California's mandated nurse-to-patient ratio law, the number of RNs licensed in the state grew almost five fold, significantly helping to close the nursing shortage. 'This is likely in part because nurses are more willing to work in hospitals that do not overload them with patients (Kuwata, 2016).'
- The unsustainable work environment, particularly unsafe staffing, is causing nurses to leave the profession in droves. According to the American Nurses Foundation (March 2022), 'One year ago, in the first annual impact assessment, 40% of nurses said they intended to leave or were considering leaving their position. Today that has jumped by 30% with 52% of the nurses surveyed now intending to leave or considering leaving. When analyzed by age, the issue is more concerning. In this survey, 63% of nurses under 35 said they intend to leave or are considering leaving.' The American Nurses Foundation goes on to say 'When nurses were asked why they want to leave, their top reasons were 1) insufficient staffing, and 2) work negatively affecting health and wellbeing.'

**Myth: Hospitals can't afford to implement safe staffing standards.**

**Fact: Safe staffing saves lives and money!**

- In a study looking at Queensland, Australia, hospitals pre and post implementation of minimum nurse-to-patient ratios, researchers observed a significant improvement in patient outcomes. These outcomes included decreased length of stay, reduced mortality, and reduced readmissions. 'In addition to producing better outcomes, the costs avoided due to fewer readmissions and shorter LOS were more than twice the cost of the additional nurse staffing (McHugh et al., 2021).'
- Look at the estimated savings (in lives and money) for just 25% of New York's Medicare patients if minimum ratios had existed: 'If NY hospitals had staffed medical-surgical nurses at the 4:1 ratio as proposed in the current legislation, we project there would have been 4,370 fewer in-hospital deaths in the 2-year period among Medicare patients. With roughly 388,160 fewer hospital days annually, we project \$658 million in cost savings to hospitals annually from shortened lengths of stay. Likewise, we estimate 1.5% and 1.1% fewer 30-day readmissions among medical and surgical patients, respectively, with a resultant annual estimated savings of roughly \$61.5 million. These estimates are produced by only about 25% of the Medicare hospitalizations in NY, so the actual savings when applied to all inpatients—both Medicare and non-Medicare—would likely be many-fold higher (Lasater, 2021).'

Colorado hospitals have repeatedly failed to provide safe environments for nurses to deliver quality care and for patients to receive that care. Coloradans deserve better. If we don't require hospitals to implement safe staffing standards, nurses will continue to leave the profession in droves and the quality of care in our hospitals will continue to decline. This terrifies me, not just for Colorado's nursing community, but for every person I love and care about who could be the patient lying in the hospital bed. Colorado needs to hold hospitals accountable. We must prioritize patients over profits. Please vote Yes on HB-1401 with the amendments recommended by Colorado Nurses Association. Thank you.

#### References:

- National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2020). The 2020 national workforce survey: executive summary.
- American Nurses Foundation. (2022). Pulse on the Nation's Nurses Survey Series: COVID-19 Two-Year Impact Assessment Survey.
- McHugh, M., Carthon, M., Sloane, D., Wu, E., Kelly, L., Aiken, L. (2012). Impact of nurse staffing mandates on safety-net hospitals: lessons from California. *Milbank Quarterly*, 90, 160-186. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0009.2011.00658.x
- Lasater, K., et al. (2021). Is hospital nurse staffing legislation in the public's interest? An observational study in New York State. *Medical Care*, 59(5), 444-450. doi: 10.1097/MLR.0000000000001519
- Kuwata, K. (2016). Spread too thin: the case for federally mandated minimum nurse-to- patient ratios in hospitals. *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*, 49(3). 635-660.