



Testimony on HB1194/SB1020

Safe Staffing Act of 2024

Position: **FAV**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sheldon Gooch. I'm a cook at a hospital and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. My department is responsible not only for preparing food for patients, but also for running the food retail operations in the hospital. We currently have over 10 vacancies in my department, and we work short staffed daily. On some days it is so severe that we have one worker doing the work of five people. I urge a **favorable** report on HB1194/SB1020: Safe Staffing Act of 2024.

Short staffing is only getting worse because management keeps insisting that we continue to "scale up" and add more retail operations while there aren't even enough workers to cover the current inpatient and retail operations. Management's focus on constant "growth" despite worker shortages is problematic for workers and for hospital patients. Workers are experiencing burnout and calling out of work frequently to care for our own mental health, but many of us don't have any sick time left to recover from burnout. Turnover is high in my department because working short staffed everyday is untenable. We frequently have to close retail operations because of short staffing, meaning that outpatients and guests aren't able to get food that day.

Nutritional aids are responsible for delivering food to inpatients and they are short staffed too. That means patients have to wait so long to get their food that it is cold when it arrives, and the food needs to be sent back to us in the kitchen to be remade, doubling our workload.

We need The Safe Staffing Act of 2024 to be implemented as soon as possible. Hospital workers are at a breaking point. With a safe staffing committee that is 50% workers, we would be able to recommend hospitals cease the bad practice of seeking exponential retail growth without adequate staffing for existing operations. We could also recommend changes to the hiring process so that it can be more streamlined instead of taking so long to onboard new workers to fill vacancies. Please vote YES on this bill. Thank you.

In Unity, Sheldon Gooch