



Bill Title: HB 624- Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans - Establishment (Safe Staffing Act of 2026)

Position: Support (FAV)

To: House Health Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Legislative Coordinator on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Date: February 16, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison and Members of the House Health Committee:

My name is Erica Puentes and I am the Legislative Coordinator for Progressive Maryland. I am submitting testimony on behalf of Progressive Maryland. **Progressive Maryland is in strong support of HB 624 - Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans - Establishment (Safe Staffing Act of 2026).** Progressive Maryland is a statewide member led organization working for a more robust, equitable and patient centered healthcare system. We are proud to be a founding member of the Patient Worker Collaborative, a coalition representing more than a million Marylanders, that is working to sound the alarm about long hospital ER wait times and the ongoing hospital staffing shortage that contributes to them.

Like all of you, we regularly hear stories from our members about very long and agonizing wait times in emergency rooms. Because our wait times average more than 4 hours (and in many hospital Emergency Departments, waits are often between 11 and 15 hours) our members are telling us that if they live close to Virginia they are opting to travel to their hospitals to be seen. At a recent community meeting, a member talked about calling an ambulance, hoping it would increase their chances to be seen and treated more quickly than if they had had a family member take them to the ER.

We know that the critical staffing shortage in Maryland hospitals exacerbates the problem. In our view, the Safe Staffing Act of 2026 offers an excellent remedy to what is ailing our emergency rooms. Creating safe staffing conditions will help our hospitals recruit and retain the workforce they need and will help ensure that we have the number of staffed beds we need in our ERs.

This legislation gives hospitals clear guidance to develop staffing committees and staffing plans that can improve staff retention, workplace safety, patient care, and health outcomes. It's not acceptable for our state to have the worst ER wait time record in the country year after year! Let's join the nine other states who have successfully adopted measures like this.

We appreciate the Health Committee and the House of Delegates for passing this bill with overwhelming support for the past two years. **Progressive Maryland respectfully urges the Health Committee to offer a favorable report on HB624.**