



METROPOLITAN BALTIMORE COUNCIL AFL-CIO Unions

**HB 624 Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans -
Establishment (Safe Staffing Act of 2026)
House Health Committee
February 18, 2026
Favorable**

To: Chair & members of the House Health Committee

From: Courtney Jenkins, President, Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Courtney Jenkins, and I am the President of the Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO, representing tens of thousands of union workers across the Baltimore region, including healthcare workers who keep our hospitals running every day.

We strongly support HB 624.

Maryland hospitals are facing a staffing crisis that directly harms both patients and workers. Our state consistently reports some of the longest emergency room wait times in the nation. Behind those numbers are exhausted healthcare workers managing unsafe patient loads and patients waiting far too long for critical care. This bill addresses that crisis by ensuring that the people doing the work have a real voice in staffing decisions that affect patient safety and workforce stability.

The Safe Staffing Act establishes hospital staffing committees that are evenly split between management and frontline care team workers, with the inclusion of a patient advocate. These committees would develop staffing plans tailored to the realities of each hospital and submit them to the Maryland Healthcare Commission. This is a balanced, collaborative approach that values expertise from the bedside while maintaining accountability.

Safe staffing saves lives. Research shows that short staffing is associated with longer emergency room wait times, increased medical errors, higher rates of infections and bedsores, more patient falls, and worse outcomes when complications arise. Longer ER stays are also linked to higher



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patient mortality. This bill would help reduce those risks and improve clinical outcomes across Maryland hospitals.

Safe staffing also strengthens our healthcare workforce. Maryland has struggled to retain healthcare workers, and burnout driven by overwhelming patient loads is a major factor. Studies show a strong correlation between staffing levels and job satisfaction. When workers are supported, they stay. This reduces turnover and preserves institutional knowledge.

Finally, safe staffing saves hospitals money. Preventable injuries, infections, and medical errors are costly. Healthier patients, shorter hospital stays, and fewer readmissions translate into significant long-term savings for our healthcare system.

Other states such as New York, Connecticut, and Illinois have already taken this step; and healthcare workers there report improved morale and better outcomes when staffing committees are empowered to do their jobs. Maryland should not lag behind.

The Safe Staffing Act is a common-sense solution to a decades-long problem. It puts patient safety first, respects healthcare workers, and strengthens our hospitals. We urge a favorable report on HB 624.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney L. Jenkins
President, Metropolitan Baltimore Council of AFL-CIO Unions