



**HB624 Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans - Establishment
(Safe Staffing Act of 2026)
Position: FAV**

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall, Chair
Health Committee
Room 240, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, Health Committee

Chair Bagnall and Members of the Committee,

Economic Action Maryland Fund is here in strong support of HB624.

Patients seeking emergency care at Maryland hospitals face the longest wait-time in the country. In fact, Maryland's wait times have exceeded the national average for more than two [decades](#). Recently, wait times have marginally improved but many patients still languish in emergency rooms waiting to be seen or waiting to be admitted to a hospital room.

There are a number of systems-wide reasons for these long wait times. A shortage of hospital beds,

One critical factor is a staffing shortage. For nurses, in particular, staff shortages directly affect patient outcomes. A 2024 [study](#) found that lower levels of nurse staffing in emergency departments are associated with delays in patients receiving treatments and poor quality care including an increase in leaving without being seen, delay in accessing treatments and medications and cardiac arrest.

In addition to nursing staff, there are shortages for other health care staff as well. A 2023 [report](#) prepared in accordance with SB440 found that Maryland is not growing its health care workforce at the same rate as other states and that health care workforce shortages are most pronounced in rural parts of the state.

HB624 establishes a commission composed of an equal number of hospital management staff and frontline and other staff to develop a clinical staffing plan to meet patients' needs. It makes sense that both management and workers who are directly engaged in patient care and support work together on solutions to ensure patient and worker safety and security.

Economic Action (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) champions economic rights and housing justice through advocacy, research, consumer education, and direct service. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

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With the rollback of Medicaid and the affordability crisis facing Marylanders across the state, it is likely that emergency departments will see an influx of new patients who can no longer afford health insurance turning to the ER as a first and last resort. It's critical that Maryland hospitals begin to develop plans that include frontline staff and management to reduce wait times, and improve patient care.

For all these reasons, we support HB624 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

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