



FEBRUARY 18, 2026

Data-Informed Staffing Plans Will Improve Health Care Quality

Position Statement in Support of House Bill 624

Given before the Health Committee

Maryland hospitals are facing a crisis of long emergency department wait times and stay durations, and evidence shows that inadequate staffing is an important contributor. Reliable information, open communication, and collaborative problem-solving are critical to solving these problems. House Bill 624 would create these structures, and similar legislation passed the House of Delegates last year. **For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports House Bill 624.**

Safe staffing committees would help address a serious problem in Maryland's health care systems:ⁱ

- As of 2024, Maryland had the nation's longest emergency department wait times.
- The Maryland Health Services Commission has identified understaffing as an important contributor to long wait times.
- Understaffing leads to poor working conditions and high turnover, creating a vicious cycle.
- Other states have seen successful outcomes from implementing safe staffing committee policies.ⁱⁱ

To be successful, staffing committees must rely on sound information. House Bill 624 would help build this knowledge base. In developing and reviewing staffing plans, House Bill 624 would require committees to acquire and consider information on:

- Existing staffing levels and gaps in staffing
- Evidence-based staffing standards, if available
- Average number patients on each unit on each shift
- Relevant information regarding patient discharges, potential admissions, and transfers
- Average level of acuity for patients on each unit on each shift

To be effective, these systems must also prioritize transparency and accountability. House Bill 624 requires transparency to three key stakeholder groups:

- **Patients and staff:** The bill requires hospitals to post a copy of the staffing plan and information on actual staffing levels in each patient unit

- **Policymakers:** The bill requires hospitals to submit annual reports to the Maryland Department of Health on how the hospital’s clinical staffing committee has addressed safe hospital staffing through the hospital’s clinical staffing plan
- **The public:** The bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to compile information from hospital annual reports and post a summary report on its website.

Appropriately staffed hospitals are among the most important components of Maryland’s health care infrastructure. House Bill 624 would create systems to promote safe staffing levels, ensure decisionmakers have reliable information, and improve transparency.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully asks that the Health Committee make a favorable report on House Bill 624.

ⁱ See Sam Williamson, favorable testimony on House Bill 905 of 2025, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2025/hgo/1dqvWKgzXFoowCfxc9sbU3g6ybAqNZyP.pdf

ⁱⁱ See Johnine Gunsalus, favorable testimony on House Bill 905 of 2025, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2025/hgo/13GCseoblMINjnJoUnY8uibouM9s-IIVi.pdf