



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

WALA BLEGAY
Council Member, District 6

February 28, 2025

RE: Statement from Councilwoman Wala Blegay in Support of the Safe Staffing Act of 2025

As a former attorney for the DC Nurses Association for eight years, I had the privilege of representing and advocating for the dedicated nurses who form the backbone of our healthcare system. I saw firsthand how safe staffing saves lives. I worked directly with nurses who were overworked and overwhelmed due to high patient ratios—leading to burnout, high turnover, and ultimately, the critical nursing shortage we face today.

I have personally advocated for safe staffing legislation before the DC Council because I know that when nurses are stretched too thin, patient care suffers. Studies have consistently shown that inadequate nurse-to-patient ratios result in higher rates of burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and an increased risk of patient mortality. According to research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, each additional patient over four per nurse carries a 23% risk of burnout and a 7% increase in patient deaths within 30 days of admission.

Here in Maryland, we are experiencing one of the worst healthcare staffing shortages in history. One in four nursing positions remains vacant, and our state holds the unfortunate distinction of having the longest emergency room wait times in the country, with patients waiting up to 20 hours for care.

As Chair of the Emergency Room Wait Time Task Force in Prince George's County, I have spent the past year reviewing every emergency room in our county. In every single emergency department, staffing shortages have been a major issue. When hospitals are understaffed, wait times skyrocket, emergency rooms become overcrowded, and both patients and healthcare workers suffer. Our findings have made it abundantly clear: solving the healthcare crisis starts with ensuring we have enough nurses at the bedside.

That is why I wholeheartedly support the Safe Staffing Act of 2025, sponsored by Delegate Jennifer White-Holland and Senator Malcolm Augustine. This legislation takes a critical step toward solving the crisis by establishing hospital safe staffing committees, ensuring that nurses and other frontline healthcare workers have a voice in staffing decisions. No one-size-fits-all model can address the complexities of patient care, but by empowering direct care workers to create staffing plans based on real-time needs, this bill will improve both patient outcomes and nurse retention.

Safe staffing isn't just about working conditions—it's about saving lives. By addressing burnout and turnover, we can attract nurses back to the field, improve care quality, and make our hospitals safer for everyone. This

County Administration Building – Largo, Maryland 20774
Phone (301) 952-3426 Fax (301) 952-4351
E-mail: CouncilDistrict6@co.pg.md.us
www.princegeorgescountymd.gov



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legislation is a cost-effective solution that will stabilize our healthcare workforce, reduce ER wait times, and ensure Marylanders receive the timely, high-quality care they deserve.

I urge your support of the Safe Staffing Act—because when we support our nurses, we protect our patients.

Sincerely,
Wala Blegay

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wala Blegay", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

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