

Hello, I hope this correspondence finds you well. I'm writing to you regarding The Safe Staffing Act. I understand that this bill will be heard soon and I would like to share with you my thoughts and feelings on the matter.

I can speak about the negative impact of the lack of timely, reliable emergency care due to short staffing. I've gone to the emergency room several times over the years, and I was unable to be seen in a timely manner for my concerns *almost every single time*. This doesn't just apply to being seen by a physician, but also applies to being called to have my vitals taken, so that I could, eventually, be seen by a physician. In fact, at the time of this writing, I've only been seen in a timely manner, and provided with reliable care, in an emergency room, *twice*. *And in both of those instances*, my mother and I chose to go a hospital that was located at a great distance from our residence, because the hospitals in close vicinity to us have been the settings of negative experiences with wait times and treatment. My mother, who has *always* been with me at the emergency room, has experienced distress, frustration, and even anger as she's sat with me while I waited to be seen, often times while I was under significant distress and/or in severe pain. She's had the displeasure of repeatedly asking, across several hours, if and when I'd be seen by a doctor. And every time she would do this, she was given one of two answers, the first being that I was "next in line" but no estimated wait time would be provided, and the second being, "I'm sorry, we're working as fast as we can, but we're short staffed." (The latter most response having some variation, depending on the choice of words, but the terms 'short staffed' were consistently mentioned.) And many times, even upon being seen, I wasn't provided with adequate care, likely because the doctors had to rush along in tending to each patient just to ensure that *everyone* who needed care would be seen. The wait times have been so long that there have been occasions where I'd go to the emergency room at midday or in the early evening, and I wouldn't be discharged until the early morning hours of the subsequent day.

My mother had a negative experience as well, almost three years ago, when she was a victim of a nearly fatal car accident. Her vehicle was hit by a driver speeding through a red traffic light. *By the grace of God, my mother survived the collision*. However, when she was taken to the emergency room for treatment, she was subjected to a long waiting period before she was seen by anyone. Worse yet, she didn't receive proper attention and care once she was seen. She wasn't

provided with a CAT scan, and she was released just hours after being admitted, instead of being held for observation overnight to monitor her condition. Though I remained composed, I was internally outraged on her behalf, because I was worried her injuries could have been worse than could be perceived by sight alone, and I feared she could have additional complications in the future because of the lack of care she received. *I felt her health and her life were being disregarded*, as a direct result of the staffing shortage (among other factors). That wasn't the kind of experience I wanted my mother, or anyone else, to have, especially after enduring a traumatic ordeal that could have resulted in death.

This has burdened the qualified and hard-working men and women who already serve within the healthcare industry, just as much as it has burdened anyone seeking care in an emergency room. As a result of these experiences (among others regarding the healthcare industry), I'm reluctant to seek medical attention. I don't have confidence in the healthcare system's ability to provide prompt, reliable care, let alone by qualified individuals who have compassion, integrity, competence, patience, empathy, and a desire to help others. No one should feel forced to choose between receiving tardy and lacking care in an emergency room due to short staffing, and going without medical attention at great personal risk to their health and/or safety. *Something must change*. The Safe Staffing Bill is the starting point for change. The Safe Staffing Bill can help hospitals improve how they meet the needs of anyone who comes to an emergency room seeking help. It can also improve the quality of care people receive, and foster trust between communities and hospitals. Without this bill and other measures like it, I worry that people will continue to fall through the cracks and be deprived of care and resources that *every human being is entitled to*. This isn't a matter of politics or ideologies. This is about respecting the dignity of every human being, which means ensuring they have access to timely, reliable care under the most pressing, stressful, and frightening circumstances. As a society, we must value life, and we must value life to such a degree that we are willing to take action that safeguards and improves the quality of life for our fellow human beings. The cost of not taking action to do so is too grave and would be an injustice for future generations to bear.

Sincerely,

Missy Wallace