

Testimony in SUPPORT (FAV) of SB 411

Hospitals - Clinical Staffing Committees and Plans - Establishment (Safe Staffing Act of 2026)

Senate Finance Committee | Feb. 13th, 2026

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Mike Walsh and I have been a resident of Anne Arundel County for 35 years in Shady Side and I am writing in support of SB 411 because we need to take care of our care workers so they can better take care of us. I believe direct care workers should be at the table of addressing the staffing crisis or I believe safe staffing saves lives and this bill is an important step towards protecting quality of care.

SB411 creates staffing committees at each hospital that ensure the entire care team is at the table to address hospital-wide challenges in providing safe and timely care. Committees will work together to submit a staffing plan that includes recommendations and staffing data on an annual basis to the Maryland Healthcare Commission. The reports will be posted on Maryland Healthcare Commission's website.

Creating safe staffing conditions will help our hospitals recruit and retain the workforce they need and will help ensure that we have the number of staffed beds we need in our ERs. This legislation gives hospitals clear guidance to develop staffing committees and staffing plans that can improve staff retention, workplace safety, patient care, and health outcomes. While blame for long wait times is sometimes attributed to overuse of the ER by patients, the actual number of ER visits per 1,000 population in Maryland is among the lowest in the U.S., according to Becker's Hospital Review. Meanwhile, under-staffed and overwhelmed ER medical staff try to care for emergency patients as best they can. Without a safe level of staffing in the ER, Maryland patients will continue to endure long and potentially life-threatening waits for emergency care. I don't know about you, but dreading a long wait time has a major influence on the way myself and my family decide to seek care when ill or injured, and that just shouldn't be the case. In order to better care for all residents in MD, we need to build confidence that the quality care we need can be delivered in a timely manner without putting care workers at harm. It's not acceptable for our state to have the worst ER wait time record in the country year after year! Let's join the nine other states who have successfully adopted measures like this.

This legislation, which passed the house the past two years, is a sensible approach that fosters collaboration and centers hospital worker voices who have often been missing in stakeholder discussions on the healthcare workforce crisis. By mandating a process, Maryland will have a foundation for adequate data collection and a holistic lens of staffing conditions through worker perceptions. For these reasons and more, I urge a favorable report on SB411, the Safe Staffing Act of 2026.

Sincerely,

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