



SB411/HB624
Safe Staffing Act of 2026
Position: **FAV**

To Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rhonda Stokes. I'm a Patient Care Technician (PCT) at a hospital where I have worked for almost 11 years. I love my job because I get to be a voice for my patients and make sure they are not overlooked. I urge a **favorable** report on the Safe Staffing Act because it would give me a forum to do what I do best, which is advocate for the safety of my patients. For example, one of my patients had Stage IV cancer. He had a history of substance dependence, so he had not been given any pain medication at all. I could see that he was in excruciating pain, so I fought for him to get a non-narcotic pain reliever. Had I not been able to spend as much time with him, he may not have gotten the medication he needed. **Unfortunately, due to short staffing, PCTs often get pulled to work in different areas of the hospital, so we don't always get to provide the focused care I was able to give this Stage IV Cancer patient.**

Normally PCTs should be assigned patients with rooms close together, but when there is a workforce shortage, we get shuffled around the hospital. I feel stretched thin. My body is strained and aching. This isn't good for patients either, because **it slows down our response time when we have more ground to cover. Another safety concern is that we are supposed to have multiple PCTs to lift patients, but with short staffing that is not always the case, which is risky for the patients and for workers.** I hurt my back lifting a patient. When I reported that to management, they just lectured me on how much weight I was supposed to lift instead of figuring out a way to have more staff on the unit to prevent injuries. PCTs don't have an option for "light duty" because our jobs are so physical. We either have to come to work while we are still recovering or take unpaid time off, which is a hardship.

PCTs used to work 8-hour shifts, now we work 12-hour shifts; and we used to work every third weekend but are now required to work every other weekend. Shifting workers schedules like that has led to more call outs and people quitting, which makes short staffing worse. It's frustrating because we're overburdened at work and we get to spend less time with our families. When we let management know that they created a schedule that was making staffing even worse, they just pacified us and didn't make any helpful changes.

It's important for workers to have a seat at the table when solutions to the staffing crisis are proposed, because we are the ones who will be able to determine whether or not those plans will actually work. Right now, management comes up with ideas on their own, we try it for a few months, then it fails because they didn't consult workers, and we have to start over with a new plan. The Safe Staffing Act can help make sure plans work the first time. **Teamwork and fairness are so valuable.** That is what this bill will bring. I'm excited to serve on the safe staffing committee at my hospital when this bill passes! Please vote **YES**. Thank you.

In Unity,
Rhonda Stokes