



April 9, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of H-7031, Joint Resolution Creating a Joint Legislative Study Commission on Safe Staffing in Hospitals — Submitted by a Member of SEIU 1199NE

Dear Chairwoman Donovan and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services:

I am a Labor and Delivery nurse at Women & Infants Hospital, and I have cared for Rhode Island's maternity population for the past 26 years.

Each year, we deliver approximately 8,500 to 9,000 babies and serve as the state's high-risk referral center.

When complications arise, patients are transferred to us from across the region. We care for the most complex cases—premature infants, critically ill mothers, and emergencies that require immediate, highly skilled intervention.

At Women & Infants we don't have a system to measure how sick our patients are and adjust staffing accordingly.

Instead, care is measured in ways that fail to reflect the true intensity of what we do.

For example, a twin delivery is counted as a single patient, despite requiring significantly more coordination and staff. In many high-risk situations, one patient alone may require the attention of multiple nurses at the same time.

Yet staffing levels remain too low. At full capacity, we may be caring for 20 to 25 patients and are forced to run many shifts with as low as 9 RN's. Poor staffing compromises our ability to provide adequate and safe care, and this is only part of the picture.

I have seen firsthand how inadequate staffing delays patient care and compromises the level of care patients receive.

When staffing does not match how much care these patients require, safety is compromised.

Experienced staff are leaving, and newer nurses are being asked to manage increasingly complex situations without adequate support.

This is not just about staffing numbers—it is about patient safety, and about protecting the families in this community that we serve.

A safe staffing study commission is a critical step toward understanding the real conditions at the bedside and developing standards that reflect the complexity of care today.

It would help highlight these issues and ensure that both patients and healthcare workers are supported appropriately.

Every mother, every baby, and every family in Rhode Island deserves safe, timely, and appropriate care.

I urge you to support H-7031.

Sincerely,

Melissa Blais, RN
Women & Infants Hospital