



April 28, 2026

Subject: Testimony in Support of S-2258, Joint Resolution Creating a Joint Legislative Study Commission on Safe Staffing in Hospitals — Submitted by a Member of SEIU 1199NE

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services:

I work as a nurse in the Mother-Baby unit at Women & Infants Hospital - we help new mothers prepare for one of the biggest challenges of their lives: caring for a newborn.

I offer my support for Senate Bill 2258 to create the Hospital Staffing Commission.

I am proud of the work we do and the care we provide. However, it has become increasingly difficult to do our jobs safely and effectively because of staffing challenges.

In the postpartum unit, nurses are often assigned up to eight patients, because each mother and baby pair counts as two patients. That means one nurse may be responsible for four mothers and four babies at the same time. Unbelievably, babies are often overlooked when staffing standards are developed.

Something as basic as helping a mother breastfeed can take up to 45 minutes, especially when a baby is learning how to latch. When we have large patient assignments, it becomes nearly impossible to support our patients' individual needs.

In addition, many mothers today are older and have co-morbidities such as diabetes or other complications. And with the rise of IVF, we are delivering far more twins - but they are not often not fully considered when determining patient acuity.

Staffing shortages can create potentially dangerous scenarios. I remember a shift where I was treating a high acuity patient when I was called into another room for a patient experiencing a code situation. Moments later all nurses had to run to help a patient who was hemorrhaging, and immediately after that I had to run to another patient needing magnesium treatment.

We managed the situation, but it was extremely stressful, especially for the many new nurses. When we are rushing, the likelihood of medical errors grows significantly - if I worry after ten years of experience, I can't imagine how new nurses feel.

Nurse morale is very low. We want to provide meaningful care but the workload often forces us to rush from room to room. We have heard some patients even describe the hospital as a "baby factory," which is heartbreaking to hear.

Unfortunately, burnout and stress is driving many experienced nurses to leave for other hospitals with better staffing ratios and pay. Across the country, we have been told time and again about the impending nurse shortage as veteran nurses retire. That is why it is so important to retain experienced nurses who can mentor and educate the next generation.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing: safe and healthy outcomes for our patients. A staffing commission could create accountability and provide an opportunity for open discussion between nurses and hospital leadership. We believe that working together, we can find solutions that prioritize patient safety and support the nurses who care for them every day.

If this were your mother, your child, or your loved one, you would want them to receive the safest care possible. That is why improving staffing ratios and listening to the voices of frontline nurses is so important.

Sincerely,

Cassie White, RN
Women & Infants Hospital