



Testimony on HB1194/SB1020

Safe Staffing Act of 2024

Position: **FAV**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Vernetta Melvin. I'm a member of 1199SEIU and an Administrative Associate (AA) in the Gastrointestinal, Genito, & Urinary Unit at a hospital. In my role, I feel how pervasive the hospital short staffing crisis is. I take calls from patients who need assistance, interact with patients' family members, coordinate care with all job classifications, enter data, admit and discharge patients, and arrange patient transportation. My department, and all the departments I coordinate with, are chronically short staffed. I urge a **favorable** report on HB1194/SB1020: Safe Staffing Act of 2024.

At least one department in my unit is running short staffed every day. When my AA department is short, Charge Nurses have to take on AA duties in addition to running the unit, assisting Registered Nurses and caring for their own patients. When the Patient Care Technicians (PCTs) are short, AAs step in to assist with tasks like bringing patients blankets and ice. Of course I am happy to help the patients, but when AAs are pulled away from our desks, coordination of the unit stops because no one is there to take calls. We can't be in two places at once.

Patient safety is our number one goal as healthcare workers! Due to short staffing, especially in the PCT department, my hospital had a drastic increase in patient falls. Patients aren't receiving pain medication on time. I've seen patients lay in bed for hours waiting to be cleaned up. Some patients who need to be supervised by PCTs 24/7 need to be restrained because there isn't anyone available to sit with them. The bottom line is patients are suffering.

Short staffing makes my job emotionally stressful. I receive a lot of verbal abuse from patients and their family members who feel they are being neglected. I've lost track of how many times I've been cursed out. I try to explain to them that I am their messenger, not their enemy, but all that frustration gets directed at me.

The Safe Staffing Act of 2024 will lead to safer, better, more effective healthcare. This is an issue that impacts every Marylander, because anyone could find themselves in a hospital bed. Please vote YES on this bill. Thank you.

In Unity, Vernetta Melvin