

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

A1752-A

By Assemblymember Gottfried

S3527

By Senator Duane

AN ACT to amend the public health law and the education law, in relation to disclosure of nurse staffing levels and nursing quality indicators

The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), representing the interests of registered nurses and the patients they serve, supports the above-referenced bill, which would require hospitals and nursing homes to disclose to consumers information related to nurse staffing levels and nursing quality indicators.

Disclosure of staffing ratios is needed so that consumers can make informed decisions when comparing and choosing hospitals and nursing homes. Studies demonstrate that better staffing levels result in better patient outcomes. Allowing consumers to evaluate staffing levels as a component of the care they can expect to receive rewards facilities that are staffing well and provides initiatives for improvement to facilities that are staffing poorly.

In many instances, health insurers do not provide choice of hospitals in a community. Knowledge of staffing ratios will assist consumers in “moving the market.”

The ratio of registered professional nurses, licensed practical nurses, and unlicensed assistive personnel within the direct care staffing mix is information already maintained by facilities. If enacted, this bill will require disclosure that factors in the level of patient acuity (a determinant of the intensity of nursing care required).

Disclosure of nursing quality indicators is needed to more accurately analyze the quality of care delivered in the state’s hospitals. For too long, quality determinations have been based solely on a medical model of success, one that uses such measurements as mortality rates and length of stay following surgical interventions. Disclosure of nursing quality indicators, including but not limited to rates of infection occurring in the facility, incidents of patient falls and bedsores, and medication errors, provides additional fundamental information about the quality of care delivered. Because of the direct relationship between nurse staffing and health outcomes, nursing quality indicators also signal the sufficiency or insufficiency of nurse staffing and can be used by consumers to complement staffing information.

This legislation is needed to restore the public’s confidence in healthcare services. Recent national public opinion surveys have indicated that Americans are recognizing a growing cost-cutting trend of reducing the number of registered nurses and/or replacing them with unlicensed healthcare workers and worry that this will negatively affect the quality of patient care. The *American Journal of Nursing* surveyed registered nurses who echoed serious concerns that those same cost-saving practices are diminishing the safety and quality of patient care. Consumers have a right to know about the quality of their health care, but can’t hold facilities accountable until they have access to meaningful measurements.

The legislation is sought by both the nursing community and consumer groups. NYSNA believes that New York State must enact this bill to ensure protections and information to New Yorkers by using state mechanisms to provide incentives for compliance. We strongly urge passage of these important efforts.

