

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

A2047

By Assemblymember John

An ACT to amend the public health law and the education law, in relation to a safe patient handling policy for health care facilities

The New York State Nurses Association, representing the interests of Registered Nurses and the patients they serve, supports the above-referenced bill which would create a Statewide Safe Patient Handling Policy for all health care facilities in New York State.

This legislation creates an eleven member New York State Safe Patient Handling Task Force within the Department of Health - identifying the composition of the task force and its powers and duties. The bill requires that a report identifying Safe Patient Handling Program elements and recommendations be submitted to the Commissioner of Health by July 1, 2010. The Commissioner of Health in consultation with the task force shall then promulgate rules and regulations for a statewide safe patient handling policy to be made available to all health care facilities by January 1, 2011. Facilities covered by this act shall file a plan for compliance with the Department of Health by July 1, 2011 that must be accepted by the Department by January 1, 2012.

Safe patient handling is a comprehensive approach to reducing the use of the manual movement of patients when lifting, transferring and re-positioning. The rules and regulations of A11484/S8358 will require that each healthcare facility's Safe Patient Handling Program include: a written policy statement, management commitment and employee involvement, committees, risks assessments, incident investigation, procurement of engineering controls, lifting and transfer aids or assistive devices, employee training and education on safe patient handling, and program evaluation and modification. Each facility will also establish a Safe Patient Handling Committee to assist with implementation and oversight of the Program.

The Nurses Association appreciates and supports the many benefits that can be derived from safe patient handling programs. Patients benefit through improved quality of care and quality of life by reducing risks of falls, being dropped, friction burns, skin tears, and bruises. Healthcare workers benefit from the reduced risk of career ending and debilitating injuries; decreases pain and muscle fatigue; and increases in morale, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession. Healthcare facilities realize a quick return on their investment through reduced workers' compensation medical and indemnity costs, reduced lost workdays and improved recruitment and retention of health care workers – including R.N.s of which the state is experiencing an ever worsening short supply. Further, these benefits will lead to the fiscal improvement of New York's healthcare system.

New York State's patients and healthcare workers deserve the positive outcomes that result from the adoption of Safe Patient Handling policies and practices. To promote quality patient care and a safer work environment for healthcare workers, the New York State Nurses Association strongly urges enactment of this legislation.

