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10/29/2024

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
1200 Washington Avenue South, Room 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

Subject: Support for Establishing Minimal Staffing Standards for Emergency Departments

I am writing to you as a concerned Critical Access Emergency Department Director and graduate student in healthcare to urge your support in advocating for legislation that mandates a minimum staffing requirement of no fewer than two qualified registered nurses (RNs) in all hospital emergency departments at all times. This standard is critical to ensuring patient safety, improving healthcare outcomes, and reducing the burden on emergency department personnel.

As you may know, emergency departments often face extreme pressures, from overcrowded waiting rooms to sudden surges in critical care needs. In many cases, a lack of adequate staffing puts patients at risk of receiving substandard care. I have witnessed firsthand, in both small and large departments, how short staffing can lead to delayed care, compromised patient outcomes, and an overall decline in the quality of healthcare services. Registered nurses are essential to the efficient functioning of an emergency department, and ensuring that no fewer than two RNs are always present will reduce the risk of medical errors, improve response times, and alleviate nurse burnout. High-risk medications frequently used in ED settings often require a co-signing RN to verify correct dosing and administration instructions.

My position is supported by a growing body of evidence linking adequate nurse staffing to positive patient outcomes. Research has shown that proper RN-to-patient ratios in emergency departments reduce mortality rates, lower the risk of adverse events, and decrease patient wait times. According to the Emergency Nurses Association Position Statement of 2020, "to facilitate safe emergency care, a minimum of two RNs should be present whose primary responsibility is patient care in the ED at all times, regardless of the size, capacity, census, or acuity of the department." Nurses play a pivotal role in triaging patients, administering lifesaving treatments, and providing emotional support to both patients and their families during critical moments. However, when departments are understaffed, these tasks become overwhelming, leading to an increased likelihood of errors and poor patient experiences.

By enacting a minimum staffing standard, we would be taking a proactive approach to addressing the systemic challenges in emergency healthcare. Specifically, I propose implementing a policy requiring that no emergency department operate with fewer than two RNs

on shift at any given time. This standard will ensure that even during times of low patient volume or overnight hours, there is always adequate staffing to handle sudden emergencies or high-acuity patients.

This policy will benefit both healthcare providers and patients by ensuring a consistent level of care in emergency departments, regardless of fluctuations in patient numbers. It will also provide nurses with the support they need to manage their workloads effectively. Furthermore, by preventing burnout and excessive stress on nurses, we can improve staff retention and overall job satisfaction, ultimately benefiting the entire healthcare system.

I respectfully ask for your support in promoting this staffing policy at both the state and federal levels. Your leadership in healthcare legislation is vital to safeguarding the well-being of our communities and ensuring that our emergency departments are adequately equipped to respond to the needs of all patients, especially during critical times.

Thank you for considering this important issue. I hope we can work together to advance legislation that prioritizes patient safety, supports healthcare workers, and strengthens the overall quality of care in our emergency departments. I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss this issue and provide any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,

Sara J. Wilson