

NYS Department of Health Staffing Study Engagement Session

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Good morning. My name is Loretta Willis and I am the vice president of the Quality Advocacy, Research, and Innovation division and Post-Acute and Continuing Care at the Healthcare Association of New York State. HANYS is the statewide association for hospitals, health systems and continuing care providers across New York. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the Department of Health's healthcare staffing study.

I am a nurse by training. I have provided care in various settings across the continuum. I know firsthand how important it is to have the right care team with the right mix of experience, education and training to meet patient needs and provide high-quality care.

I am here today to stress that **HANYS and our members strongly oppose government-mandated nurse staffing ratios** that would impose rigid requirements for every New York hospital and nursing home. These would override the professional judgment of nurses and healthcare professionals and restrict access to care. These one-size-fits-all ratios would apply to all facilities – regardless of size, location or the needs of their patients.

Effective and appropriate staffing is critical to the provision of quality care in all healthcare organizations. Staffing decisions should remain with local hospitals, nursing homes and healthcare clinicians.

Delivering effective and reliable patient-centered care requires a full partnership with nurses working within a multidisciplinary team alongside physicians, medical assistants, care coordinators, aides, other allied professionals and with active patient and family engagement.

Hospitals and nursing homes develop staffing plans tailored to individual patient care needs. These staffing plans are determined by many factors that appropriately vary, starting with the condition of the patient and his or her needs. It also includes the experience, education and preparation of the staff; the use of technology; the physical layout

of the hospital or nursing home; and the number and competencies of clinical and non-clinical staff collaborating with nurses to provide care. HANYS and our members are committed to strengthening these efforts, provided they are grounded in evidence-based strategies.

Healthcare is about people taking care of people. Supporting the healthcare workforce is a top priority of HANYS and every hospital, nursing home and health system. Recruitment and retention at all levels of the healthcare workforce is critical to delivering the highest quality care.

HANYS supports workforce investment strategies such as:

- **Tuition assistance programs for Bachelor of Science in Nursing:** Research has linked a BSN-prepared workforce with better patient outcomes. Tuition assistance will help encourage individuals to pursue a BS in Nursing, which is now required for nurses.
- **Work and learn programs:** These programs provide flexible learning opportunities, often at the work site, for nurses to achieve a BSN.
- **Support for nurse residency programs:** Research has shown that nurse residency programs can improve recruitment and retention of registered nurses and can positively influence professional accomplishments and commitment to nursing.
- **New graduate and new hire mentor/preceptor programs:** To encourage nurse retention, many hospitals and nursing homes are offering mentor and preceptor programs to provide personalized support for nurses adjusting to a new work environment.

- **Programs to promote future workforce:** Programs such as high school “career days,” job shadowing and internships can encourage the entrance of new students into the nursing profession.
- **Permanent per diem and float pools:** Many hospitals and nursing homes have set up internal, specially trained nurse registries to respond to fluctuations in staff, patient volume and acuity need.
- **Formal “on-call” programs for specialized areas:** Specialized areas such as labor and delivery and the operating room routinely have highly-trained staff “on-call” to respond to expected fluctuations in those environments.
- **Staffing committees:** Organization-based committees with representation from all patient care stakeholders, including unit level nurses, can proactively address processes, procedures and staffing assignments on an ongoing basis to ensure patient and staff needs are met.

HANYS and our members are committed to improving quality and patient safety. We’ve made significant gains in recent years. For example, more than 175 hospitals across the state participate in a federal quality improvement collaborative, the New York State Partnership for Patients. Within the most recent NYSPFP contract period, this effort averted more than 11,800 harms to patients.

These outstanding clinical and patient safety improvements are happening as New York’s hospitals and health systems are expanding access to cutting-edge healthcare services, transforming operations to emphasize patient-centric healthcare, shifting care to the outpatient setting and educating the next generation of medical and health professionals.

In closing, HANYS is committed to working with state government and all healthcare stakeholders as we pursue our common goal: ensuring that the highest quality care is accessible and affordable to all New Yorkers. However, government-mandated nurse staffing ratios that would impose rigid requirements in every New York hospital and nursing home will not achieve that aim.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the department's study. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

HANYS: Always There for Healthcare

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