

Rachel Hunt, RN

Remarks in support of HB 4550, 4551, 4552

Nov. 9, 2023

Good morning, my name is Rachel Hunt. I became a registered nurse to care for people on what could be one of the most difficult days of their lives. I wanted to be the nurse who could make a horrible situation more tolerable by getting to know them and treating them with dignity and respect while advocating for their needs. My patients are more than just a room number to me, they are humans and deserve to be treated as such.

I've had the opportunity to travel around Michigan and work in several hospitals throughout our state, both union and nonunion. This experience has allowed me to gain insight into one thing our Michigan hospitals have in common – substandard working conditions that endanger the patients and the healthcare workers. Specifically, unsafe nurse-to-patient ratios.

This puts nurses in situations where we are forced to prioritize the care of our patients throughout our entire shift. Nurses shouldn't have to choose if we are going to pass urgently needed medications or change patients who have been sitting in their urine and feces for several hours. This has happened too many times to count. Several times the previous shift or other units would have worse nurse-to-patient ratios than ours. Patients shouldn't be left with life-altering disabilities after a stroke that could have possibly been prevented if the symptoms were caught in time and lifesaving medication was given. However, they were missed because the nurses had too many patients to effectively assess patients.

My Christmas shouldn't be ruined by thoughts of the "what if's" of a patient who went into respiratory arrest. I should be enjoying my kids opening their gifts. The real question should be, why was the patient in a 6:1 ratio when they should have been in a 3:1 ratio? My fellow nurses and I constantly cared for critically ill patients in high-ratio assignments ... sometimes up to 11 patients per nurse. This isn't new though. It has been going on long before COVID-19 and many years before I even became a nurse, but no one will listen to us.

Since no one is listening, nurses are leaving. We are losing our older nurses with the wisdom to train and mentor others as well as our newer nurses due to being overwhelmed and overburdened.

I am one of those nurses who has left. I will not work in these current conditions. It's demoralizing to leave every single shift knowing I cannot possibly provide the care the patients deserve and that I am trained to give. We continue to be asked to do more with less. I will not

risk my license to work in these unsafe and hazardous conditions. The patients deserve safe and equitable care at every hospital in Michigan. If the nurse-to-patient ratio bill passes, I would gladly go back to the bedside. Being a bedside nurse in the hospital is my passion. It's shameful that I've been forced into a position of having to make a choice between my passion and safety because of these unsafe working conditions.