



February 15, 2022

Health Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and the 6,300 employers and more than 500,000 employees we represent, I am writing to express our concerns with HF 3242 (Olson).

This bill would place a significant burden on Minnesota's hospitals and health systems that have been operating for two years under extremely challenging times. It would also set a disturbing precedent in workplace management – establishing a state mandate that the staffing of a work site be set by a committee whose decisions are controlled by one collective bargaining party. Under the bill, this staffing committee is not advisory. It is given the authority to establish the number of employees at work, in this instance the number of Registered Nurses. These are decisions that should be made by management or in collaboration with employees through collective bargaining. The legislature should not upend an employer's decisions about staffing by unilaterally handing those decisions to a favored group of employees.

The bill is also overly punitive and may lead to unintended consequences for Minnesotans across the state. All of us depend on hospitals and health systems for the delivery of health care services. Granting the Commissioner of Health the authority to close a hospital for failing to meet a staffing plan on three occasions sets an unfair standard and could significantly reduce Minnesotans' access to care. Hospitals would have little choice but to turn patients away if a staffing plan could not be met.

There is no industry or community in the state where Minnesota's workforce shortage is not a challenge. The Department of Employment and Economic Development recently reported that in the health care sector alone, Minnesota has 40,000 open positions. Employers are scrambling to retain and hire workers. To do so, they are offering increased wages and salaries, expanded leave benefits, remote working and more flexible work arrangements, customized training, tuition assistance, and childcare support. In much the same way, we know most hospitals and health systems are currently trying to hire more nurses, and wages are escalating.

Establishing a one-sided, punitive process for staffing hospitals will not help to address the workforce challenges the health care sector is facing. It is our hope that the legislature focuses on licensing and credentialing efforts that help ease this shortage, rather than an approach that further complicates operations and may decrease the availability of care.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bentley Graves", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bentley Graves
Director, Health Care & Transportation Policy