*Sample Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed from your hospital’s nurses re: mandatory nurse staffing ratios (customize as appropriate for your hospital)*

As nurses of *[name of your hospital],* we have deep and serious concerns about a proposal in the Illinois General Assembly that would impose mandatory nurse staffing ratios at hospitals (House Bill 3871).

Throughout our careers as direct care hospital nurses, we have been honored to care for people during the most vulnerable times of their lives. We provide high-quality, compassionate care based on the specific conditions and individual needs of each and every patient.

However, this proposal would create a numerical, “one-size-fits-all” mandate for nurse staffing from Springfield, overriding the expertise and judgment of nurses and other medical professionals at our hospital. This rigid, by-the-numbers approach would severely limit our flexibility and decision-making ability to meet and respond to the unique and ever-changing needs of our patients.

We believe in flexible staffing that starts with assessing each patient’s condition and care needs and allows our hospital, with the input of direct care nurses, to match our nursing staff to patients’ individual needs. This approach enables our hospital to provide the right and appropriate staffing and care that patients need instead of being handcuffed by ratios that force us to add extra nurses in units where they are not needed.

Mandatory staffing ratios wrongly assume that patients in observation units need the same level of nursing care as patients in psychiatric units or hospital units with complex medical and surgical patients. Staffing ratios would require unnecessarily high staffing levels during the middle of the night when patients are sleeping. And staffing ratios would force highly trained nurses to perform tasks normally handled by support staff, such as handling dietary tasks and changing bed pans. It’s an ineffective and costly way to handle healthcare staffing decisions and it could impede our hospital’s ability to provide the best possible patient care.

There is no conclusive evidence that nurse staffing ratios improve quality or patient outcomes. But they will drive up healthcare costs in Illinois by at least $2 billion a year – for patients, families, employers and hospitals.

**If nurse staffing ratios are mandated for hospitals, including [*your hospital name]*, we will be forced to reduce or close down services and units. There will be times when our hospital will have to go on bypass during unpredictable periods of elevated need when there are not enough nurses in the emergency department to treat patients to comply with the ratio mandates. How can we meet the needs of our patients and local community if we eliminate services or go on bypass?**

We urge our state legislators to oppose legislation (House Bill 3871) imposing unworkable and costly nurse staffing ratios that won’t improve care for our patients.