

YES FOR PATIENT LIMITS

The Truth About the Patient Safety Act: *It Protects ALL Members of the Health Care Team*

This fall, a coalition of more than 100 nursing, health care and consumer advocacy organizations are supporting a ballot initiative to be put before the voters in November that will dramatically improve patient safety in our state's acute care hospitals by setting a safe maximum limit on the number of patients assigned to a nurse at one time, while providing flexibility to adjust nurse's patient assignments based on the specific patient needs.

Despite false claims made by the hospital executives, the Patient Safety Act will not result in the reduction of non-RN support staff. In fact, the law was carefully crafted to protect other members of the health care team by explicitly prohibiting the reduction of non-RN staff in meeting the requirements of the law. Here is the exact language:

"Each facility shall implement the patient assignment limits established by Section 231C. However, implementation of these limits shall not result in a reduction in the staffing levels of the health care workforce."

This language was drafted in consultation with SEIU 1199, the union that represents thousands of non-RN support staff in Massachusetts. It is so strong, the Mass Hospital Association went to court to try and stop the ballot from going forward citing this provision. The Supreme Court

ruled that the law's prohibition against reduction of support staff is valid and the law should go before the voters in November.

We also look to California, which passed this law in 2004, to see what actually happened there. Below is a quote from Sal Rosselli, a prominent union leader in that state who represents thousands of non-RN staff throughout the state.

"14 years ago when our RN safe patient limits law was being passed here in California, many hospital executives were spouting the same line of doom and gloom as they are today in Massachusetts. Our union represents mostly non-RN hospital workers. The truth is there were no layoffs of non-RN caregivers and no hospital closures as a result of California's law. The only outcome was that it made care much better for patients."

Sal Rosselli is president of the National Union of Healthcare Workers

The Patient Safety Act is supported by 90 percent of the nurses in Massachusetts as the best means of ensuring the highest quality care for our patients. Dozens of research studies clearly demonstrate that safe limits will result in better care for our patients. The experience in California validates the research findings, showing that patients receive more and better care at lower costs, and that no hospitals have closed as a result of this vitally important public health measure.

The nurses of Massachusetts recognize the role and value of all members of the health care team, which is why we have included language in this law to protect your role in the care of our patients. For the good of our patients, and for your own family and friends who depend on all of us for their health and safety when they are most vulnerable, we hope you will support this initiative and vote YES for patient limits on November 6.

For more information about the Patient Safety Act, visit www.safepatientlimits.org.