

Testimony before the Pennsylvania Senate Education Committee
Monday, April 29, 2024, at 10 am

Presented by Wayne Reich, CEO, MSN, MBA, RN

Good morning, members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for inviting me here to address an issue that affects the nursing workforce.

My name is Wayne Reich, and I am the CEO of the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association. We represent all nurses in the Commonwealth.

I am also a registered nurse. I've been in nursing for more than 20 years, whether at the bedside, in education, or in my present position.

Nurses play a critical role in every facet of the healthcare industry. From primary care to specialty care, and from birth to death, nurses touch each patient at every step of the healthcare journey. In fact, I'm certain that everyone in this room has interacted with a nurse.

Unfortunately, the nursing profession is looking less and less attractive to prospective and qualified candidates, as well as to seasoned nurses. There are fewer reasons to get into the field and to stay in the field. Those reasons include impractical nurse-to-patient ratios in hospitals, rising violence against healthcare professionals, and the fact that Pennsylvania has yet to fully enact the nursing compact to allow nurses to work from one state to another.

Then there's the cost of pursuing a nursing degree. A four-year bachelor's degree program at a public school can cost anywhere between \$40 thousand and \$80 thousand. The cost at a private school is between \$60 thousand and \$120 thousand. Believe me, nurses would welcome legislation that would help to reduce that cost, and it would also be an incentive to keep nurses in the Pennsylvania work force.

PSNA believes that your efforts will help to bring more individuals to the profession – and to keep them in Pennsylvania – by making education more accessible and affordable through the legislative packages that you are considering. Ultimately, we'll see enhanced patient care, reduced patient mortality, shorter hospital stays, and improved patient satisfaction.

In summary, your efforts will benefit all Pennsylvanians.

Thank you.

