

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

CONTACT: Steve Morris / smorris@pasnap.com / (215) 341-8804
Megan Othersen Gorman / mgorman@pasnap.com / (215) 817-5781

Today, Frontline Healthcare Professionals from Across PA Met With Legislators and Held a Press Event/Rally in Harrisburg to Highlight the Deepening Nurse Staffing Crisis and Escalating Incidents of Workplace Violence in Hospitals, and to Urge Support for Legislation to Address Both

Harrisburg - Hospitals have long understaffed nurses as a strategy to enhance profits, and nurses and other healthcare professionals have long experienced workplace violence at a rate exponentially higher than workers in all other sectors. But the pandemic, which has precipitated the hemorrhaging of healthcare workers from hospitals across the nation, has greatly exacerbated both challenges.

“We are now in a full-blown crisis,” says Maureen May, RN, president of PASNAP and a longtime Temple University Hospital nurse – “one that affects the quality of bedside care for all Pennsylvanians and the health and safety of frontline healthcare workers across the commonwealth.”

What’s more, low staffing numbers raise the stress levels of both patients and staff. If a healthcare worker isn’t available to meet an agitated patient’s needs, the patient’s agitation accelerates, and verbal and even physical violence can result. Surveys are showing that workplace violence in healthcare has accelerated since the beginning of the pandemic.

“We just had a situation where a whole family beat up a manager, and administration is keeping it hush hush,” says Temple University Hospital lead medical technologist Selena Hodge, MT, BSHA/BSHM. “That doesn’t help us – transparency helps us, the prioritization of our safety helps us. That’s why it’s imperative that healthcare professionals have a voice in ensuring our own safety in the workplace. It can’t be left solely to hospitals, because they won’t do it.

The Patient Safety Act (HB106 and SB240) would require safe minimum nurse staffing standards, based on patient acuity, in hospital units across Pennsylvania. **The Healthcare Facilities Violence Prevention Act** (HB348 and SB1256) would require hospitals to track incidents of workplace violence and give healthcare professionals a voice to make sure they’re protected from violence in their workplace.

Healthcare professionals from across the commonwealth gathered today in Harrisburg to alert state legislators (and Pennsylvanians at large) to the dual crises within Pennsylvania hospitals and to urge them to pass both pieces of legislation. The Patient Safety Act has majority status in the House.

“We’ve been called heroes, and we’ve been called angels,” says Peggy Malone, RN, a longtime behavioral health nurse at Crozer-Chester Medical Center in Delaware County, “and while we appreciate it, we don’t want or need that kind of recognition. What we really want is to be able to take care of our patients to the best of our abilities and what we really need is to be safe while we’re doing so.”

Attached you will find information on both the Patient Safety Act and the Healthcare Facilities Violence Prevention Act and research to support the critical need for action.

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth and was founded on the belief that patients receive the best care when clinical-care staff have a strong voice to advocate for both patients and themselves.