

NEW JERSEY STATE AFL-CIO

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January 30, 2006

Dear Members of the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee:

TESTIMONY OF THE NEW JERSEY STATE AFL-CIO IN SUPPORT OF A-2052 (CONAWAY)

Requires DHSS to Review Standard of Care at Health Care Facilities in Which 40% or more of Direct Patient Care Nursing Staff are Temporary Hires

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO is proud to stand with several of our affiliates, representing thousands of health care workers, in support of A-2052. We thank Assemblyman Conaway for his leadership on this issue and for posting this bill for a vote before the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee.


We believe that this legislation, which requires health care facilities throughout the state to notify the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services when the number of direct patient care nursing staff working in a facility on a temporary basis exceeds 40% of the total number of comparable health care providers at that facility, serves two very important purposes.

Most importantly, this bill, which also requires the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services to review the standard of care at facilities which meet this staffing criteria, adds an extra layer of protection to patients that may be receiving treatment from staff not entirely familiar with that facility's standards and procedures. The skills and abilities of these temporary nurses are not being questioned by this bill, nor do we suggest that they should be. However, when non-permanent staffing levels reach these proportions, the lack of institutional knowledge present at any given time does become an issue for concern.


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Additionally, A-2052 puts the hospital industry on notice that the State of New Jersey will not sit by and turn a blind eye to anti-union activities, refusal to negotiate in good faith with collective bargaining units, or the artificial prolonging of labor disputes. A large majority of New Jersey residents, and their elected officials, value the contribution of organized labor to the lives of working families. The nurses which are represented by this organization, and its affiliated unions, are thoroughly trained and unquestionably capable to perform their duties, and have fought tirelessly to ensure that they receive the support they need from their employers to provide their patients with the highest standard of care available. Allowing them to be replaced by temporary workers to increase profits, at the expense of the patients, is unacceptable.

Once again we thank you for allowing us to be heard on this matter and respectfully request that you vote favorably on this bill.


Charles Wowkanech
President

Sincerely,


Laurel Brennan
Secretary/Treasurer

CW:LB:jmn
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