

April 1, 2024

The Honorable J.D. Vance
U.S. Senator for Ohio

Dear Member of Congress,

My name is Megan Barber and I am a nursing student at Firelands Regional Medical Center School of Nursing in Sandusky, Ohio. A highly ranked hospital based diploma program providing new Registered Nurses. Our program provides us with hundreds of clinical hours in various settings, working under nurses of different backgrounds, specialties, and schedules. One common sight throughout all areas of nursing is burnout. Nursing burnout became exacerbated during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am writing to you to seek support for the H.R. 7546 Bill, introduced on March 5th this year. The Nurse Overtime and Patient Safety Act of 2024. Regulations limiting work hours were first instituted in the 1930s, but adoption of work hour regulations has been slower in the health care sector. The work year for registered nurses is longer than the national average by 200 work hours. This is of concern, especially when nurses function on 12 hour shifts, which leaves little time for rest and recovery to begin with. Limiting nurses' work hours will help prevent burnout which improves patient safety. Nurses working long hours often experience fatigue, poor sleep quality, impaired vigilance, and lack of alertness. All of these things contribute to medical errors and result in compromise of patient safety.

The bill is comprised of orders stating that nurses shall not work more than 48 mandatory hours within a work week, or longer than 12 hours consecutively within a 24 hour period. It also provides protection against whistleblowers, nurses may file complaints against a provider or institution who violates the orders without fear of repercussions. If a provider or institution violates the bill, there may be a civil money penalty of ten thousand dollars imposed for each individual violation. This is important in order to hold the providers of service accountable and hold the orders in place.

As an upcoming nurse myself, I find that this is a pressing issue that needs attention immediately. To improve patient safety, and improve the healthcare workforce as we are in an all time high need for nurses.