

**WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION**

**RESOLUTION #1**

**SAFE STAFFING LEVELS**

WHEREAS, Safe staffing standards and nurse-to-patient ratios are issues of concern to all staff nurses in the State of Washington, and

WHEREAS, Current health services research continues to demonstrate that higher numbers of Registered Nurses available to care for patients lead to better patient outcomes with less morbidity, mortality and fewer complications, and

WHEREAS, Improvements in safety of staff, job satisfaction and reduction of workplace injuries have also been directly linked to higher staffing levels, and

WHEREAS, ANA and other nursing groups, have established staffing standards that are recommended to assure that safe staffing is available to meet the individualized needs of patients, and

WHEREAS, Development and implementation of staffing plans for nursing services are essential to ensure that the classifications, skills, experiences and numbers of health care professional providing direct patient care are sufficient to meet the needs of patients, and

BE IT THEREFORE

RESOLVED, That the WSNA draft and sponsor safe staffing legislation and/or other safe staffing public policies to safeguard the public and support Registered Nurses and assistive nursing personnel, and

BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED , That these public policies require each institution that provides care for patients to include direct care registered nurses in the development and ongoing evaluation of facility specific staffing plans, and

BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, That WSNA strongly encourage the Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare to assist with drafting strong contract language that establishes safe staffing levels for each service area covered by a WSNA contract and to seek support from the Washington State Labor Council to assist with passage of the safe staffing public policy agenda.

**Justification:**

With the worsening nursing shortage, shrinking budgets and increased acuity and

intensity in hospitals and other inpatient settings, staffing issues are among the greatest concerns of nurses across in Washington State. Some nursing unions in other states have proposed government-mandated RN-to-patient staffing ratios, however it is difficult to establish mandated staffing levels that apply to every hospital since staffing needs are patient specific and dependent on many factors that vary from hospital to hospital and unit to unit. Safe staffing standards must be individualized by facility and unit and must be determined with the involvement of the registered nurses who regularly deliver care on that unit.

### **Proposed Implementation Activities**

WSNA will draft and sponsor safe staffing legislation and through the E&GW program, develop model contract language and assist nurses in preparing and negotiating contract proposals that establish safe staffing levels for each service area within the institution.

### **Possible Benefits:**

Safer patient care and improved patient outcomes; greater job satisfaction for nurses.

### **Range of Direct Costs:**

Direct costs would range from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for cost of development and distribution of proposals, informational brochure and articles to local newspapers, districts and local units and the legislature. This does not include additional costs for:

- Staff time for development of model contract language
- Staff time to meet and brief media and op-ed writers and reporters
- Lobbyist time
- Staff time to work with agencies to write new WACs following passage of legislation.

**Adopted by WSNA General Assembly, May 2, 2003**