

Nikia Parker, RN

Remarks in support of HB 4550, 4551, 4552

Nov. 9, 2023

Thank you, Chair Rogers and committee members.

My name is Nikia Parker. I came down from Wexford County today for this hearing. I've worked as a registered nurse in the Emergency Department of a northwest Michigan Hospital, in one capacity or another, since 2003.

A year ago, I made a really tough decision to walk away from the career that I feel I was put on this Earth to do, which is bedside emergency room nursing.

At the core of what we do as nurses is we advocate for our patients – all patients – to make sure they leave us a little better than when they came to us. So, when you go home and you can't sleep because all you're thinking about is "Did I miss this? Did I forget that? Did somebody get hurt because of the care I provided or because of the care I wasn't able to provide for them, or God forbid die?" It eats at you. It kills you a little bit every day to the point that you become paralyzed in fear of doing your job.

It broke me to the point of deciding this had become too much. I made the decision to take a 50% pay cut to work as a paramedic full-time. I do still work one day a week in the emergency department despite how abused I feel, because I want to keep my connection to nursing.

But I am an example of how there is no shortage of available nurses – there is a shortage of nurses willing to work in the conditions that hospitals have created. According to LARA and the Bureau of Labor statistics, there are more than 50,000 Michigan registered nurses who are not working as nurses right now.

If the Safe Patient Care Act passes, I am one of those nurses who would return to the bedside full time to provide direct care and I know many others would as well. Our communities deserve the best and you can play a huge part in helping to protect them when they're at their most vulnerable.