



June 6, 2008

Dear Senate President Murray:

Associated Industries of Massachusetts, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable and the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation **oppose HB4783**, which would require the Department of Public Health to establish specific nurse staffing ratios for the Commonwealth's hospitals.

While the fundamental proposition of this law – regulation of hospital staffing by state government – always has been ill advised, its passage now, at a critical juncture in the state's implementation of Health Care Reform, would be particularly harmful.

With Senate passage of “An Act to Promote Cost Containment, Transparency and Efficiency in the Delivery of Quality Health Care”, you have taken a leadership role in the effort to control health care costs. We commend you for the many elements in your bill advancing the long process of reshaping the health care system to address costs and to ensure the success of the reform effort. A government-mandated staffing bill, however, directly endangers that success.

The proposed bill is projected to add between \$200 million and \$500 million annually to the cost of health care delivery in the Commonwealth. Adding hundreds of millions in costs in a short time frame – with no proven effect on patient care or the public's health – is directly contradictory to the intent of the Senate's efforts, and our collective goal, of creating lasting cost containment strategies.

Hospitals should not be micro-managed by mandating staffing levels either through General Law or, by extension, through state agency regulation. The complexity of determining appropriate nurse staffing levels for any health care institution involves myriad factors and expert judgments that cannot be adequately reduced to regulation. The ratio bill saddles the Department of Public Health with a staffing task that is best left to hospital personnel directly responsible for providing competent care for patients.

Therefore, we respectfully urge you and the members of the Senate to oppose HB4783.

Sincerely,



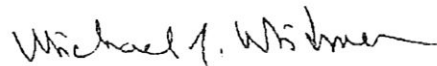
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