



**SEIU**Healthcare®  
United for Quality Care

**Yakima Valley  
Memorial Hospital**  
February 22, 2022

## Taking action at our hospital and in the legislature for safe staffing and cleaning worker safety at Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital

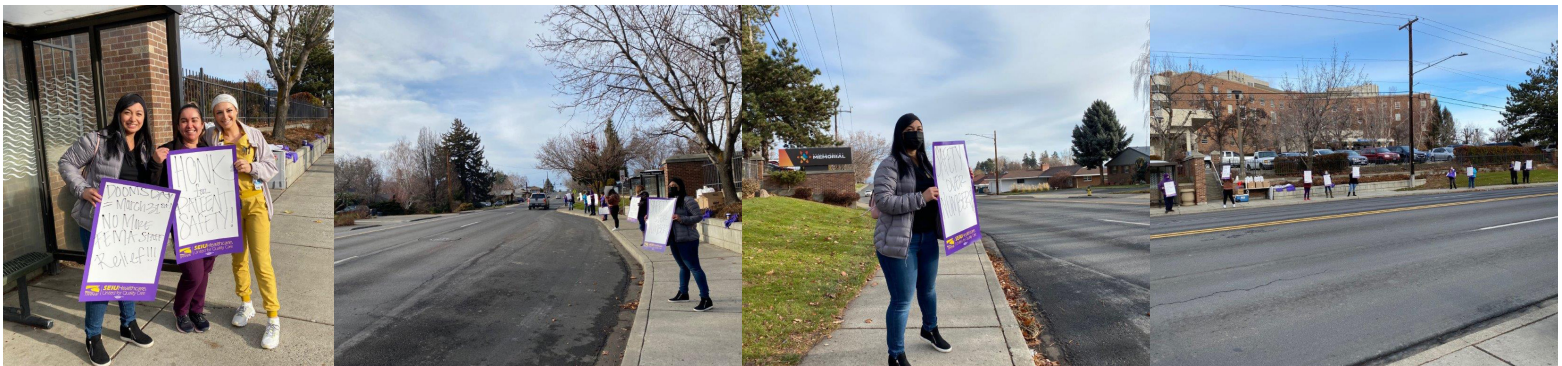
A few months ago, we rallied outside to sound the alarm to our community — if healthcare workers are outside, there's something wrong inside.

We are one of the three hospitals in the state that qualified for National Guard help because our staffing is at such a critical level. We also have FEMA nurses to supplement our staffing needs. We know the issue is not that there aren't enough nurses, but that nurses and other healthcare workers aren't willing to work in such hazardous conditions. That's why we are standing outside the hospital and working in coalition with other healthcare unions across the state to pass safe staffing standards.



"With over 100 nursing positions open, we continue to have declining numbers of staff retention. No breaks, incentives ending, and one day closer to the FEMA nurses leaving, thus, leading toward a catastrophic event in healthcare. Short staffing has been an issue well before COVID, and the pandemic worsens it as our employer continues to not value us as essential enough. It's already unsafe with nurse to patient ratios, but could become so detrimental that the hospital could no longer function safely. We stood outside on a cold day in December to fight for our right to safe staffing because we want the community to know what's really going on inside. Would you want to bring your loved ones here? - Karen Arreola 2EW RN Oncology, Telemetry, & Med-Surg Unit"

*- Karen Arreola 2EW RN Oncology, Telemetry, & Med-Surg Unit*



## Mediation update on our Medical Discount grievance

In January 2020, management discontinued the 10% medical discount for care received at Memorial. We filed a grievance on the issue and on January 31st we met with a federal mediator to discuss alternatives that would make our members whole. We did not come to a resolution and are working to schedule another mediation date to keep discussing the impacts this takeaway has had on our union members and to come to an agreement. Because we have a strong union, we have the ability to tell the hospital that this is not right and instead of taking this benefit completely away we need to find a compromise together.





"As a member of the legislative bargaining team and our nurse practice staffing committee, we have been working very hard in the legislature to pass safe staffing

ratios and introducing ratios similar to California's. We have met with our legislators, we have sent emails, we have attended Senate hearings and written testimonies as to why ratios will provide the best patient care and keep and retain more nurses. Now we need your help: we are asking all our colleagues to join us in the fight for safe staffing ratios by emailing your representatives"

- Tim Jennings, 1N RN



"My passion has always been around safe staffing. I have seen too little of that since the pandemic began. We are in a catastrophic staffing situation where the safe care that has always been our goal seems to be "pie in the Sky." The goal now seems to be, "make it work" (i.e. substandard care). Our staffing matrix has had some improvements over the years with staff input, but even that

minimum is disregarded in the moment. Often we don't have a Free Float RN as mandated in our contract. The turnover has been horrendous which worsens the staffing shortage we already have. The FEMA nurses will leave at the end of February. After 38 years of hospital nursing, I am actually frightened to think about how healthcare can maintain its viability. We need legislation to support us because our employers seem unable to move beyond patching something up in the moment and hoping for the best. Oh...and limit our overtime! We are burning out and can't see through the forest fire any longer. Join us in the fight for safe staffing at our hospital: get involved, email your legislators and take action with us."

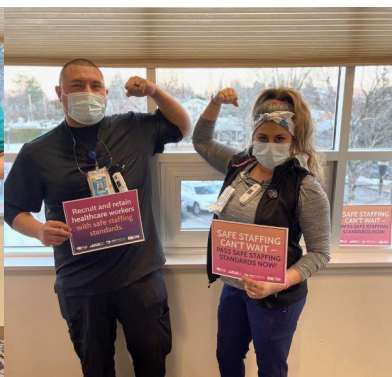
- Trish Bowman, 3EW RN

**It's time that the legislature steps up for healthcare workers! Email your legislators urging them to keep patients safe and healthy by supporting HB 1868:**



<https://1199nw.org/3rozy5K>

**Our coworkers are taking action and supporting our safe staffing bill!**



# Yakima Staffing Committee Letter of Support

Colleagues,

As the Nurse Staffing Committee members at Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital, we are excited to share that our legislation to address staffing standards, staffing committees, breaks/overtime and enforcement has been introduced in the Legislature: House Bill 1868/Senate Bill 5751.

**Having worked with management to address short staffing and staffing complaints, we are writing to share what's in the bill and why we support it. And we're writing to ask that you, too, advocate with us in the coming weeks to make that a reality.**

We are running out of time before crisis staffing and closures become the new norm in our work. For many of us, crisis staffing is already the new norm. And we are disappointed in the responses and lack of action by management, year after year.

We know what our patients need, and we know what we need to do our work. Our bill brings together our best ideas straight from our experience:

- HB 1868/SB 5751 strengthens enforcement of our Nurse Staffing Committees and expands the inclusion of job classes represented. **We know our work is a team sport – none of us can succeed if our colleagues are continually short staffed.** It's time our Nurse Staffing Committees become Hospital Staffing Committees to reflect that reality.
- HB 1868/SB 5751 will close the many loopholes in enforcement of our existing Breaks, Overtime & Staffing Committee laws. **It is well past time that we are, in reality, given to our breaks.** And when we work tirelessly throughout the year with management to build and agree upon staffing matrices that keep our patients safe, CEOs cannot be allowed to simply ignore that work.
- And HB 1868/SB 5751 sets safe, minimum staffing standards for RNs, CNAs, Emergency Department Techs and Monitor Techs to ensure that frontline staff are not forced to take dangerous patient loads. **We are every day risking our licenses and patient safety because our calls for investment in hiring have been ignored for years.** Our colleagues understandably choose to leave their jobs for higher paying traveling positions and facilities with better staffing. Our state should be a destination for healthcare workers and we can do so by ensuring staffing standards in every hospital, informed by the research and our professional standards.

On all these issues, responses from management have fallen far short of adequate. Frankly, we have heard it all, and it's not enough:

However, even before COVID, we've faced significant challenges in fulfilling our charge, our committee is not successful. Despite our best attempts, basic things are not prioritized – management has not agreed to the FTEs we need for allowing meal and rest breaks, we have recurrent holes in the matrix and they do not use the committee as a serious space to address these gaps, and when we elevate problems there is no accountability for management. Another issue we have is that unit based staffing committees are not happening bi annually on every floor like they should be. Until we change the culture at the hospital no one is going to want to work here—it feels apparent to workers that the problems that are so serious to us are not a priority for management. We have been trying year after year but nothing works—we need our legislators' help to do something different.

- They have claimed that hiring more staff will cost too much, yet they are now spending millions on costly traveling nurses and continue to give bonuses to their top executives.
- And they have pointed to the overall lack of workforce to fill new positions. We agree workforce development must be prioritized– and believe that minimum staffing standards and stronger enforcement of existing laws is a necessary part of that. New entrants will not stay in our field if the job doesn't improve—we are all seeing the turnover. If we make employers focus on the top priority of healthcare workers–staffing–some people will opt back into practice, others will enter for the first time and stay, and we will be best positioned to compete as we offer the best jobs in the country.
- When we ask for staffing standards, they claim it's a one-size-fits-all approach that's too inflexible to meet the needs of our hospital. But if our staffing committees were fully empowered to deliver on their job – and more job classes included at the table – we could actually make staffing decisions that are right for our hospital. And they frequently tell us that minimum staffing standards would cause our Emergency Rooms to overflow with patients waiting to be seen – and yet that is exactly what is happening now, with no end in sight.
- They've even claimed minimum staffing standards would lead to closure of our hospitals, even though there's no evidence in other states with these standards.

We are ready to do so, and hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

The Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital Nurse Staffing and Practice Committee

Trish Bowman, Med Surg, RN

Sylvia Keller, OR RN

Alice Westphal, Med Surg NAC

Tim Jennings, Psychiatric, RN

Heather Sparks, Emergency Room RN

Ruth Kessinger, Telemetry, RN

Renee Bauer, PACU RN



# Cleaning workers HB 1837 has passed out of the House of Representatives

This bill focuses on ergonomics and how to prevent workplace injuries like musculoskeletal disorders such as sprains and hypertension. HB 1837 will repeal the 843 restrictions L&I currently has. Too many housekeepers are being hurt on the job, leading to serious adverse health conditions. Something needs to change, we need reform now! The bill has now passed out of the house and is now in the Senate. We need everyone to take action on this bill to support our housekeepers and keep them safe. It will not only benefit EVS workers, but also other service workers too. Legislators need to hear your stories!



"We have a lot of additional work because we are extremely short staffed. Our work is very heavy, and we are always running around quickly, which can lead to injuries. Yakima Memorial has told us for over a decade that they're going to bring in more workers, but they have not. We have less and less as time goes on. If the hospital could employ more workers, we would not get hurt as much as we do now. On January 29, I testified in the Olympia legislature and asked our legislator Curtis King to pass this bill. We are essential workers in this pandemic and we have not been receiving respect and consideration like our counterparts (no incentives or bonuses for extra shifts). Please get involved and help us send letters to our legislators and support passing this Bill 1837."

- Joely Gonzales, EVS Utility Technician

## Spanish

"No hay trabajadores. Todos estamos trabajando más de lo que podemos hacer. Hay mucho trabajo porque no hay trabajadores. Yakima Memorial nos ha dicho por más de una década que va a traer más trabajadores. Si el hospital fuera más responsable y emplearan más trabajadores, no nos lastimaríamos tanto, pero andamos corriendo sin ayuda de los managers y tenemos mucho trabajo, por eso nos lastimamos, porque tenemos que hacer mucho trabajo. Este 29 de Enero yo testifiqué en la legislatura de Olympia y pedí al legislador Kim pasar esta ley HB 1837. Esta ley ayudaría a que los trabajadores ya no nos lastimemos, ayudaría a recobrar la economía porque no tendrían que pagar overtime. Nuestro trabajo es muy pesado y siempre andamos corriendo. Esta situación hace que nuestro empleador tenga más favoritismos. Tenemos que manejar equipo pesado y somos trabajadores esenciales en esta pandemia, y somos los trabajadores más discriminados. No recibimos respeto y no hay incentivos, no hay bonus para nosotros. Por favor manden cartas y apoyen pasar esta ley HB 1837."

- Joely Gonzales, EVS Utility Technician

## Call on your legislators to pass HB 1837!



<https://1199nw.org/3GsOOEk>