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June 21, 2011

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
United States House of Representatives
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Schakowsky:

On behalf of the 1.6 million active and retired members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I want to thank you for introducing the Nurse Staffing Standards for Patient Safety and Quality Care Act of 2011 (H.R. 2187). We strongly support your bill, which would improve the delivery of safe and quality health care by requiring hospitals to meet minimum federal nurse-to-patient staffing ratios.

Direct care nurse staffing standards also help to address the nursing shortage by correcting harmful working conditions that drive nurses away from the bedside. Research shows that unsafe nurse staffing levels jeopardize quality patient care and put patients at greater risk of preventable medical errors, hospital-acquired infections and death. The legislation also requires the development of staffing standards for licensed practical nurses and directs the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission to recommend changes in additional reimbursements needed due to the safety requirements of the bill. Your bill also protects the rights of nurses to speak out for their patients and to speak out for themselves without the fear of discrimination or retaliation.

Thank you again for your indefatigable leadership on this important issue and for standing up for nurses and safe patient care.

Sincerely,

Charles M. Loveless
Director of Legislation

CML:lbm

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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