SECTION 1: OVERVIEW
Ohio Nurses Association (ONA) is the preeminent voice for all of Ohio’s RNs. ONA’s nurses have molded the nursing and healthcare landscape in Ohio since 1904.

Nurses formed ONA to have a powerful platform for the protection, promotion and advancement of our profession, beginning with Ohio’s Nurse Practice Act.

Ohio Nurses Association is sounding the alarm that understaffing in Ohio hospitals equals a patient care crisis that must be addressed.

This report is based on a survey conducted by ONA, as part of the CODE RED campaign. The survey sought to explore various aspects of nursing, including insights into the state of the profession and to measure support for a bill that includes minimum staffing standards. The results from this survey allow a deeper understanding of the nursing and healthcare landscape by amplifying the voices and experiences of nurses in Ohio.

The ONA CODE RED campaign focuses on five strategic areas: staffing levels, working conditions, pipeline, corporate trends, and trust and agency. Our campaign is laser-focused on promoting minimum staffing standards, as staffing standards greatly influence all five strategic areas, and have a significant impact on patient outcomes. The campaign includes working with employers and lawmakers to implement the staffing standards our nurses need and our patients deserve.
METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using an online survey tool. The survey was sent to every nurse licensed in the state of Ohio. The survey was open from May 30, 2023, to June 30, 2023 resulting in 11,229 usable survey submissions.

The report was peer-reviewed by the Ohio Nurses Association’s Council on Practice members:
- Nicole Baltich, MS, APRN-CNS, AGCNS-BC, ACCNS-AG, CCRN
- Catharyne Henderson, BSN, RN, RN-BC
- Anita Kendrick, BSN, RN, CMCN

The study was conducted and report created by the Ohio Nurses Association staff members:
- Erica Bell, MBA, BSN, RN, PCCN, CCRN
- Brittany Turner, MSN, RN, CNE® cl, NPD-BC
- Sandy Swearingen

LIMITATIONS

Every effort was made to resolve limitations for this survey project. The survey was sent via email to every licensed nurse in Ohio using the address on file with the Ohio Board of Nursing. Every nurse in Ohio is required to provide the board with their most up-to-date email address. Access to the survey was limited to those who opened the email and are technologically savvy to the extent needed to complete an online survey. To mitigate this limitation, the original email was followed by two additional email reminders.
SURVEY INSIGHTS

- 58.05% of nurses who left the bedside did so because of patient care load.

- 70.09% of direct care nurses are currently considering leaving the bedside because of patient care load.

- 91.44% of nurses would support a bill that included minimum staffing standards.

- 88.79% of nurses would consider staying at the bedside if Ohio had legally enforceable minimum staffing standards.

- 42.80% of nurses who have left the bedside would consider returning to the bedside if Ohio had legally enforceable minimum staffing standards.

Legislation resulting in legally enforceable minimum staffing standards in Ohio is essential to retain nurses in direct care roles, to recruit nurses to direct care roles, and to allow Ohioans to receive safe healthcare in our state.
Based on the sample size and demographics represented, the results in this report are highly likely to accurately mirror the general nursing population in Ohio.*

- Survey Sample Size: 11,229 validated surveys from nurses in the State of Ohio
- Population Size: 308,286 nurses licensed in Ohio

*Given the sample size results are reliable within +/- 1 percent.

80% of survey respondents were Registered Nurses (RN), and 20% were Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN).

This mirrors the Ohio licensed nurse population where RNs account for 82% and LPNs are 18%.

This report utilizes the term nurse to describe both RNs and LPNs.
73.63% of respondents were nurses working in direct care roles currently.

88 Counties in Ohio are represented in the data results.

The issues revealed by the survey data and represented in this report are problematic across the state.
SECTION 2: LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS
91.44% of nurses would strongly support or support a bill that included minimum staffing standards for hospitals, while only 1.87% would strongly oppose.

If a staffing bill included minimum staffing standards (nurse-to-Patient ratios) for hospitals I would...
7 out of every 10 direct-care nurses are considering leaving bedside nursing due to current conditions.

88.79% of direct-care nurses said minimum staffing standards in Ohio would increase their likelihood of remaining in a direct care role.

If legally enforceable nurse-to-patient ratios were in place in Ohio, would this increase your likelihood of remaining in a direct care role?

Yes

No

Minimum staffing standards will keep nurses at the bedside in Ohio.
RATIOS WILL ADD NURSES TO BEDSIDE ROLES IN OHIO

OHIOANS NEED LEGISLATION WITH MINIMUM STAFFING STANDARDS

58.05% of nurses who have already left direct care nursing jobs cited patient care load as a factor.

But, 42.80% said they would consider returning to or pursuing bedside nursing if enforceable minimum staffing standards were passed.

Factors affecting patient care load include, but are not limited to, number of patients, stability of patients, required monitoring and treatments.
This legislation establishes guidelines and minimum staffing standards, ensuring safe and high-quality care. Improved staffing enhances patient outcomes, reduces nurse burnout, and attracts nursing professionals, in turn fostering a resilient healthcare workforce. Supporting and enacting this bill into law prioritizes the well-being of patients and nurses, strengthening Ohio's healthcare system.

**Bill Highlights**

- Creates a $20 million Loan-to-Grant program for nurses who complete 5 years of nursing service in the state of Ohio, either working at the bedside or in nurse education.
- Establishes minimum staffing standards in every Ohio hospital.
- Preserves nurse staffing committees in every Ohio hospital and gives them meaningful representation in establishing safe staffing levels in their hospitals.
- Allows for temporary deviations from minimum staffing standards only in extraordinary circumstances in the interest of patient care.
- Creates a reporting system for anyone, employee or public, to file a complaint against a hospital for inadequate staffing and provides whistleblower protection.
SECTION 3: WORK ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY
NURSE TURNOVER IS PROBLEMATIC AND COSTLY

In the survey, 83.21% of nurses reported high or very high turnover, impacting patient care continuity and team dynamics.

Turnover causes inadequate staffing, which leads to excessive workloads, increased stress, and decreased job satisfaction. Addressing staffing is crucial for retaining nurses and fostering a sustainable workforce, improving patient outcomes and work environment.

The mean cost of replacing a staff RN is $52,350 (range: $40,200 to $64,500), reflecting an increase from the 2021 average of $46,100.²

Improved staffing has been shown to decrease patient length of stay and readmissions, which increases cost savings for patients, hospitals, and taxpayers.³

LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE MINIMUM STAFFING STANDARDS CAN REDUCE TURNOVER
38.83% of nurses report their patient care unit is rarely to never adequately staffed.

Inadequate staffing often leads to unsafe assignments with too many patients for the nurse to provide safe care.

"The odds of 30-day mortality for each patient increased by 16% for each additional patient in the average nurse’s workload." \(^3\)
Nurses were asked to answer questions about the impact short staffing and doubling assignments has on patient care. The most frequent response was that short staffing and/or doubling assignments results in delays in responding to patient call lights. A delay in response to call lights can lead to patient harm. Response delays increase the chance a patient will experience a fall, thus increasing the risk of severe harm or death (sentinel event). The Joint Commission’s Sentinel Event Data 2022 Annual Review revealed that falls were the leading cause of sentinel events within the hospital setting.  

Nurses are essential in maintaining patient safety, monitoring health conditions, administering medications, and responding promptly to emergent needs. Insufficient staffing of bedside nurses can result in compromised patient care, increased medical errors, longer response times, and increased risk of negative outcomes. Various studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between improved hospital nurse staffing and better patient outcomes, such as decreased complications and mortality rates, shorter hospital stays, and increased patient satisfaction.  

It is crucial to retain and support bedside nurses to uphold the highest healthcare standards and safeguard the well-being of the public.
According to a 2022 study funded by the Ohio Nurses Foundation, the well-being scores of Ohio nurses indicate that they are currently experiencing distress. The study suggests that nurses are facing significant challenges and hardships that are negatively impacting their overall well-being, thus serving as a valuable indicator of the emotional and psychological strain that nurses are enduring, highlighting the urgent need for interventions and support to alleviate their distress and promote their mental health.

Recent research published in the Journal of Nursing Management has emphasized the significance of rest and meal breaks in enhancing the quality of patient care and minimizing medication errors. Inadequate staffing creates an environment where nurses can not safely take a break, which places patients at risk.

According to the ONA survey:

- 63.45% of respondents indicated they only rarely or sometimes get a meal and break during a shift of caring for patients.

- 92.48% of respondents indicated they are very fatigued or fatigued during shifts when they do not receive meal and rest breaks.

According to a 2022 study funded by the Ohio Nurses Foundation, the well-being scores of Ohio nurses indicate that they are currently experiencing distress. The study suggests that nurses are facing significant challenges and hardships that are negatively impacting their overall well-being, thus serving as a valuable indicator of the emotional and psychological strain that nurses are enduring, highlighting the urgent need for interventions and support to alleviate their distress and promote their mental health.

**BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS WILL RESULT IN OHIO RETAINING MORE NURSES**
SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATIONS
Ohio nurses and frontline healthcare workers are calling on Ohio lawmakers and healthcare corporations to take action to stop the flood of staff leaving Ohio’s acute care settings due to burnout, exhaustion, and the moral injury stemming from unsafe staffing in our state’s hospitals. The solutions must go beyond legislation, as Ohio hospitals are in crisis and in dire need of reform.

Recommendation No. 1: Support the Code Red Campaign and Contained Initiatives

The ONA CODE RED plan includes working with employers and government agencies to address the need for increased nursing staff to meet the needs of Ohio patients. The CODE RED Campaign aims to address this issue by advocating for the expansion of grant and loan programs available to nurses through public and private sources, as well as providing engaging opportunities for professional development through our continuing education programs.

One of the biggest drivers of this crisis is employers' profits-over-patients decision-making, where executives put their economic bottom line ahead of patient care and the safety of their frontline healthcare workers. Our CODE RED campaign demands a seat at the table for nurses to counterbalance the dangerous and destructive decision-making by corporate executives which frontline caregivers can no longer endure.

Trust and agency refer to the importance of nurses being valued, respected, and safe at work. Our CODE RED campaign recognizes the impact and toll that violence, discrimination, and disrespect have on our ability to provide quality care for our patients. Through our collective efforts, ONA members will hold employers accountable for creating a safe and healthy work environment.
Recommendation No. 2: Enact the Nurse Workforce and Safe Patient Care Act

Enacting the Nurse Workforce and Safe Patient Care Act will ensure safe staffing in Ohio.

Legally enforceable minimum staffing standards will result in:

- Increased retention of direct care nurses in direct care roles
- The return of nurses from non-direct care roles to direct care roles
- Increased quality in healthcare for Ohioans
- Decreased harmful and sentinel events in Ohio hospitals
- Cost savings through reduced turnover and lower rates of infection and readmission
- The recruitment and retention of top nursing talent in Ohio

Ohio cannot sustain the current trend of losing nurses. There is no level of recruitment into the nursing profession that will overcome the escalating trend of poor retention.

Ohio must stop the hemorrhage of nurses. We must stop the bleed with legally enforceable and safe minimum staffing standards.


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For additional information or media inquires, email Ohio Nurses Association at CodeRed@ohnurses.org