



HOSPITAL STAFFING COMMITTEES

## Working Together for Patient Care

Washington State's new hospital staffing law – Senate Bill 5236 – is a commitment to supporting the well-being of both patients and hospital workforces. A direct result of collaboration between Washington State hospitals and health care unions, **SB 5236 strengthens existing staffing laws to uphold the highest patient care and worker safety standards** in urban and rural settings.

We all rely on a strong health care workforce to deliver quality care, and staffing hospitals and care settings is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic process. **The new hospital staffing law offers Washington hospitals and health care unions an opportunity to fortify and improve the staffing committee process.**



### **Patients and Health Care Workers Benefit from Collaborative Staffing Committees**

- With collaborative and inclusive input from nurses and administrators, hospital staffing committees develop staffing plans to meet patient needs in urban and rural settings.
- Comprised of 50 percent direct care nursing staff and 50 percent hospital management, committees will work collaboratively to **develop a hospital staffing plan with patient needs at the center of decisions.**
- Effective hospital staffing plans will ensure patients retain access to high-quality, safe, reliable, and effective care.



### **Compliance and Accountability Measures Safeguard Quality Working Conditions for Health Care Workers**

- SB 5236 ensures hospitals adopt a policy regarding compliance with the staffing plan and gives the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) a greater role in investigating complaints alongside the Department of Health (DOH).
  - Hospitals will report staffing plan compliance rates semiannually every January and July beginning in 2026.
- The bill also **expands uninterrupted meal & rest break requirements** to all staff paid hourly or covered by a collective bargaining agreement who are involved in direct patient care or clinical services and requires hospitals to provide quarterly reports on their compliance rate.
  - Hospitals must meet meal & rest break requirements 80 percent of the time or receive technical assistance and face penalties.
- **Hospital staffing committees will draft a team charter** outlining procedures for electing members, roles and responsibilities, meeting schedule, and processes by which complaints will be reviewed and resolved.



## Innovative Staffing Solutions Protect Quality Care

- WSHA member hospitals have undertaken a multi-year statewide initiative, Committing Action for Resilient Environments for Patients & Staff (CARE), based on CEO listening sessions held with staff. Some focus areas of the initiative include providing trauma support services on paid time or paid time off for staff, supporting best practices to help hospital staffing committees operate optimally, offering opportunities for staff professional growth and development, and exploring innovative solutions to staffing challenges.
- **The Washington State Hospital Association is committed to providing guidance and working collaboratively** with Washington hospitals and other stakeholders to optimize hospital staffing committees and innovative staffing and care solutions.

### KEY DATES

January 1, 2024

- Hospitals must establish Hospital Staffing Committee (HSC) with expanded membership.

July 1, 2024

- HSC proposed staffing plan for 2025 due to hospital CEO for review and annually thereafter.
- HSC must file a charter with the Department of Health.
- Uninterrupted meal & rest break requirements expand and formal compliance tracking begins.

July-December 2024

- Hospital CEO reviews plan, provides written feedback to the HSC and works with committee on final plan.

October 1, 2024

- Hospitals adopt written policies and procedures regarding compliance with the hospital staffing plan.

January 1, 2025

- Hospitals must submit final staffing plans to Department of Health and annually thereafter.

July 1, 2025

- Hospitals must begin tracking staffing plan compliance monthly.

July 1, 2026

- Penalties for less than 80% compliance with meal & rest breaks begin for urban/system hospitals.

January 1, 2027

- Corrective action plan required for compliance with staffing assignments in staffing plan less than 80% of the time. Penalties for not following corrective action plan begin.



Washington hospitals are committed to exploring and implementing innovative care delivery models and new staffing solutions, including recruitment, retention, workflow improvements, supportive technology, and any other methods that help strengthen the delivery of quality care.

Cassie Sauer, CEO, Washington State Hospital Association