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May 5, 2007

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove
PO Box 40600
336 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

RE: Support for HR 1809 (the Patient Safety Act)

Dear Representative Upthegrove,

I am a Pacific Lutheran University nursing student graduating at the end of May. I plan on entering full-time employment at the end of the summer as a RN, BSN in King County. Over the past two and one half years I have spent over 1100 hours at six different hospitals in King, Pierce, and Thurston counties. During that time, I have consistently found caring, dedicated, hardworking nurses who are willing to go the extra mile for their patients. However, a constant theme that I hear no matter where I go is frustration concerning their workloads. There is never enough time to fully accomplish their job of caring.

As you know, HB 1809, the Patient Safety Act, will come up for a vote again next session. First of all, I want to thank you for your vote in favor of it. Secondly, I am asking that you will continue to support the Patient Safety Act.

One strength of HB 1809 lies in the fact that it gives nurses at the bedside a voice in staffing decisions. Can you think of anyone more qualified to make decisions concerning workload and safety issues than those who are directly providing the care?

Another strength is that it stipulates staffing decisions must be evidence-based. Research has shown that when nurses have too many patients to care for, patient safety is jeopardized (Medscape Today, 2004). HB 1809 will guarantee that staffing decisions will be made with the patients' safety as a priority.

If passed, the Patient Safety Act could help to alleviate the critical nursing shortage that we are currently experiencing. One of the main reasons nurses give for leave the bedside is the staggering burden of work they are asked to carry day in and day out. They experience job dissatisfaction and burnout and see no hope for change. HB1809 offers hope.

As a soon-to-be nurse, I again thank you for your support and ask for your continued support of HB 1809, the Patient Safety Act. If you have any questions about this bill or any others that pertain to nursing please feel free to contact me. I would be willing to do the necessary research to provide you with background and information from a nurse's perspective.

Sincerely,

Lucretia Shafer

Medscape Today (2004). *Nursing Workload Affects Quality of Care and Patient Safety*. NINR Summaries. Retrieved May 5, 2007 from http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/469513_2