

May 23, 2025

CHA Position: **Vote NO on SB 596**

To: The Honorable Members of the Senate

From: Kathryn Scott, Legislative Advocate

SB 596 (Menjivar) — Oppose

To provide effective patient care, hospitals and nurse leaders must have the flexibility to make real-time staffing decisions based on constantly changing conditions, such as changing patient acuity levels or emergencies that cause a surge in patients. Every day, hospitals ensure they meet staffing ratios that require a specific number of nurses based on patients' needs — and hospitals often staff at levels higher than the minimum to account for unexpected surges in demand.

Senate Bill (SB) 596 would require a hospital's on-call list to include at least 10% of all registered nurse (RN) staff at the hospital. However, there is no "one-size-fits-all" answer to the ideal size of an on-call list or nursing float pool, and staffing should be tailored to the specific needs and operational dynamics of each hospital. This is why the California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of more than 400 hospitals and health systems, opposes SB 596:

- A set pool size might be considered excessive for non-critical care units, leading to increased costs and operational inefficiencies if not managed properly.
- The variation in nursing specialties could also make it operationally difficult to have the appropriate specialty RNs on call for each shift, given the differing needs and requirements of certain hospital units.
- The California Department of Public Health would be required to investigate every allegation of a ratio violation within 10 business days, no matter how minor or specious the complaint. However, the department does not have sufficient staff to meet this requirement and would need to hire additional surveyors and employees.

SB 596 would increase costs for all hospitals — including public hospitals — under these new requirements. This would only put hospitals at further risk, especially given that: 53% of California hospitals are losing money every day to deliver patient care, the federal government is examining sweeping cuts to Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California), and the Office of Health Care Affordability is capping spending well below the basic rate of inflation.

For these reasons, CHA urges your NO vote on SB 596.