*Sample Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed from your hospital’s CEO/leaders (customize as appropriate for your hospital)*

*(Name of your hospital)* and all hospitals across Illinois are strongly opposed to a very harmful legislative proposal (House Bill 3871) that would impose mandatory nurse staffing ratios in hospitals. Staffing ratios are unworkable and will not improve quality or patient outcomes, but they will drive up costs for everyone and force our hospital to reduce staff and healthcare services.

A one-size-fits-all numerical approach to staffing takes away flexibility and decision-making autonomy from the healthcare professionals at our hospital who have the training, experience and knowledge to decide how to provide the high quality care that each patient needs.

Not all patients are the same. Not all nurses are the same. Not all hospitals are the same. Patient mix and volume and the individual conditions and care needs of patients change quickly in a hospital setting, minute by minute, hour by hour. Our local healthcare professionals need the flexibility to react and adjust based on their professional judgment in order to provide the best patient care.

There are already state laws on the books, including the Nurse Staffing by Patient Acuity Act, ensuring that direct care nurses and supervisors collaborate on determining appropriate staffing levels at their hospitals, based on the acuity of their patients.

There is no conclusive evidence that staffing ratios improve quality or patient outcomes. There have been many studies on the experience of California, the only state to have adopted nurse staffing ratios, and they have not reached any consistent conclusions on the effectiveness of staffing ratios.

Implementing nurse staffing ratios in Illinois could cost $2 billion annually, costs that cannot be absorbed, especially by hospitals that are struggling financially, including Safety Net and Critical Access Hospitals. This proposal will increase healthcare costs that will be passed on to patients, families and employers.

Most concerning are the negative consequences for patients from imposing nurse staffing ratios. Our hospital and hospitals across the state will be forced to reduce or eliminate services – such as behavioral health services *(add in other services that your hospital might be forced to cut) –* and lay off staff in order to meet the mandated ratios. Patients will have less access to the healthcare they need.

Finally, there are not enough nurses in Illinois to meet the ratios, with a projected shortage of 21,000 nurses and one-third of registered nurses in Illinois planning to retire within the next five years.

Local nurse leaders should make decisions for our local hospital on how best to provide high quality care to our patients 24/7/365 – rather than legislators in Springfield making that decision for 200 hospitals across Illinois. Complex decisions on caring for patients should remain in the hands of the healthcare professionals in our local communities. We urge our local state legislators to oppose and vote No on House Bill 3871 – or any other legislative proposal – that would impose mandatory nurse staffing ratios at hospitals.