



# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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### Senate Bill 283 - Safe Staffing Standards for Nurses

#### Sponsor Statement Ver. A

May 12, 2026

Senate Bill 283 addresses a critical pillar of Alaska's healthcare infrastructure: the safety of patients and the nursing workforce. By establishing evidence-based minimum staffing standards for registered nurses, this legislation aims to reduce medical errors, decrease burnout, and ensure every Alaskan receives high-quality care.

Alaska's healthcare system faces a growing crisis. High patient-to-nurse ratios lead to fatigue, moral injury, and an exodus of skilled professionals. Research consistently shows that when nurses are assigned too many patients, the risk of complications, infections, and mortality increases significantly. Given Alaska's geographic isolation and workforce shortages, we cannot afford to lose more nurses to preventable burnout or compromise patient safety.

Senate Bill 283 provides a structured, enforceable staffing framework:

- **Mandatory Minimum Staffing Standards:** The bill sets maximum patient assignments per RN based on level of care – 1:1 or 1:2 for intensive care, 1:4 for emergency departments. These standards reflect best practices, research, and recommendations from Alaska's bedside nurses. Exceptions apply for emergencies, extreme weather, and rural hospitals declaring a temporary staffing crisis.
- **Hospital Staffing Committees:** Hospitals must form staffing committees composed of at least 51% direct-care RNs to develop and oversee annual staffing plans.
- **Prohibition on "Averaging":** Hospitals may not average patient loads across a shift, and virtual nurses may not count toward compliance.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Hospitals must publicly post staffing levels and report to the Department of Health, with civil penalties for non-compliance.
- **Nurse Protections:** SB 283 protects nurses from retaliation when reporting violations or refusing unsafe assignments.

Safe staffing is a patient safety and public health priority. By passing SB 283, Alaska sends a clear message that it values its healthcare workers and prioritizes patient lives.

I urge your support of Senate Bill 283.