

RICHARD JONES MBE

7th July 2015,

Mr William Powell AM

Chair – Petitions Committee,

Ty Hywel,

Cardiff Bay,

Cardiff

CF99 1 NA

Dear Mr Powell,

Re: P-04-625 ‘Support for the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill’

Further to an email from Kayleigh Driscoll, Petitions Committee Deputy Clerk on 2nd July 2015, I would very much like my petition to remain open rather than close.

I would further urge the Petitions Committee to recommend that Stage Two scrutiny of ‘The Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill’, commences as soon as possible.

I was absolutely delighted when on the 3rd June 2015 the Assembly unanimously (with agreement from all political parties) agreed the Bill should proceed to Stage Two of the legislative process.

This Stage Two discussion in The Health and Social Care Committee was scheduled for 9th July 2015, but has recently been cancelled. I am dismayed by this turn of events and I fear bureaucratic delays will be used as excuses to prevent the Bill from progressing.

Large numbers of the Public and many Nurses signed to show their support for this Bill and I think it would be quite wrong for this Bill to be ‘lost’ in the administrative maze. The whole Assembly has agreed it supports the general principles, so the discussion on the detail must be allowed to happen. The Stage Two discussions should be arranged as soon as possible.

As a retired Registered Nurse and Nurse Teacher of over 44 years' experience in Wales, I am convinced this Bill will quite literally save patients' lives. For example, a similar law when introduced in California reduced 30 day mortality rates by between 10% – 13%. Professor Rafferty's research (carried out in the UK) showed a 26% increase in mortality on wards with a lower staffing ratio's.

Quite simply nursing at the hospital bedside requires time. Poor nursing levels means an increase in patient falls, infections, medication mistakes, a lack of communication, less care of nutrition and hydration needs to say nothing about supporting the patients hygiene needs etc. All of this research is referenced fully in the extensive evidence taken by the Health & Social Care Committee in their Inquiry.

It will come as not surprise to you that I have followed the discussions on this Bill in the Assembly very closely. I have been struck by the number of Assembly Members who have commented that they are quite convinced of the link between nursing numbers and safe care for patients and do not need convincing about this, but instead some have expressed the view that legislation is not needed because (I paraphrase slightly) 'It should happen anyway'. As an outside observer to these discussions, I am quite astonished by this attitude. I'm sure we can all agree that many things should indeed 'happen anyway' but when they are important things (such as saving patient's lives) we MUST take all the steps we can to secure this happening. Laws have been passed on Health & Safety that have saved lives in dangerous industries. Equality Legislation is another example of legislation that has altered organisational behaviour and allowed the talents of different groups to flourish in Business. There are laws on food hygiene and there are laws on the number of staff in industries such as animal welfare, aviation and education.

The evidence (please see the RCN Employment Survey 2013 and other information from the Inquiry of the Health & Social Care Committee) clearly shows that our Health Boards here in Wales are not meeting the current recommended standards on safe nursing levels. As the cuts continue to impact, it is a growing temptation to NHS Managers to save money by cutting nursing posts. This causes the quality of patient care to decline quite rapidly and too often this is only recognised in retrospect when a major scandal hits the headlines.

Throughout my career it has been a privilege to care or to support quality care of patients throughout the NHS in Wales and I want to see Safe Nurse Staffing Levels

enshrined in Law, which should be the right of every one of your constituents across Wales.

Thank you once again for your consideration of my petition. For the reasons I have outlined above I would prefer the petition to remain open until the Stage Two discussion is held. I would further urge the Petitions Committee to recommend that Stage Two Scrutiny of the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill commence as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Jones

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