

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-625
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00797/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

11 March 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February on behalf of the Petitions Committee and Richard Jones MBE regarding petition P-04-625, Support for the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill.

I support wholeheartedly the principle behind Kirsty Williams' suggested legislation, which is to ensure the appropriate numbers of nurses are available on our hospital wards to deliver safe and high-quality nursing care. For this reason, I would like to engage constructively with the legislative process, to see whether the proposed legislation can contribute positively to the range of tools and levers we already have available to achieve that ambition.

However, I also believe it is entirely possible to achieve the policy aims set out in the member's bill under existing powers. We are investing £10m recurrent funding for hospital nurse staffing as part of our response to the Francis enquiry and a new calculation system known as an acuity tool was introduced into the Welsh NHS in April 2014. Used in conjunction with nurse-sensitive data and professional judgement, this nuanced approach provides staffing levels based on patient needs, not a rigid formula.

Providing the right number of staff in any given situation is a complex matter. Current practice is to use a triangulated approach to determine nurse staffing levels, using professional judgement; the acuity tool, and nurse-sensitive indicators. Such an approach does not lend itself to incorporating a fixed minimum ratio, and I am concerned that the bill focuses solely on nursing staffing, ignoring the vital role of the other health professions. It also misunderstands the role of health boards, whose responsibility it is to ensure safe services.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford @wales.gsi.gov.uk

In conclusion, I am concerned that the bill in its current format would propose an onerous monitoring and reporting regime, and would require amendment to add value to the current policy direction.

I hope you have found my reply helpful and that it has helped to clarify my position on these issues.

Best wishes,

Mark

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services