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Councilmember Yvette Alexander
Chair, Committee on Health
District of Columbia Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

November 8, 2013

Dear Madam Chair:

On behalf of the 2,800 members of The Medical Society of the District of Columbia and the thousands of District patients they treat each and every day, I am writing to you to express the Medical Society's opposition to **B20-0101**, The Patient Protection Act of 2013, and **B20-0111**, The Nurse Safe Staffing Act of 2013. No one likes to write a letter in opposition to "patient protection" and "nurse safe staffing", especially the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, but *these bills are about neither*.

I certainly understand that the bills' sponsors had nothing but good intentions in introducing these bills, but it has become clear in the months since introduction, and with further scrutiny, that the purported benefits do not outweigh the unintended consequences of state-mandated nursing quotas. When the Medical Society looks at proposed changes in public policy, we always ask one question first, "Is it good medicine?" In this case, the clear answer is "No."

Nurse staffing in hospitals is an incredibly complex issue requiring the expertise of multi-disciplinary teams. There is nothing static about the scheduling and use of nurses to complement the care-giver team. It can change from minute to minute as the Navy Yard tragedy bore witness to. Each hospital is different, each department within the hospital is unique, and to apply a one-size-fits-all approach will likely mean that none are properly staffed. Public policy makers must think long and hard when they consider adopting legislation that would micromanage private businesses- and that is even more so the case when it comes to complex healthcare organizations. All healthcare providers want to increase patient safety and enhance the quality of medical care provided to District residents, and much has been accomplished in the past decade and certainly more will be achieved going forward. Let us not take a step backwards by adopting mandatory nursing quotas.

We all share the goal of *doing right by patients* - no one more so than the 9,000 physicians licensed in the District of Columbia. The best way we can show that at this point in time is a "NO" vote on the so-called Patient Protection Act of 2013 and Nurse Safe Staffing Act of 2103. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with you in making our City a healthier place to live and work.

Sincerely,

K. Edward Shanbacker
Executive Vice President