

Correspondence from the Petitions Committee: P-04-625 Support for Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Received 12 March 2015)

Dear Llinos

You mentioned that the Health and Social Care Committee will be considering the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill next week. As you are aware, the Chair of the Petitions Committee, William Powell, wrote to the Minister for Health and Social Services on 26 February asking for his views on a Petition that called for support for the Bill. The petition has since gathered 1,579 signatures and will be formally considered by the Petitions Committee on 24 March.

The Minister for Health and Social Services has now replied to William Powell and I attach a copy of his letter in case it is of assistance in your Committee's consideration of the Bill next week. Also attached for completeness is William Powell's original letter, which sets out the terms of the Petition and the supporting information submitted with it.

Regards

Steve George 

Clerc y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
Petitions Committee Clerk

Gwasanaeth y Siambr a Phwyllgorau  
Chamber and Committee Service

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
National Assembly for Wales

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[www.assembly.wales](http://www.assembly.wales)

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](mailto: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

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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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau  
Petitions Committee

**Mark Drakeford AM**  
Minister for Health and Social Services  
Welsh Government  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd / Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Our ref: P-04-625

**26 February 2015**

**Petition title: P-04-625 Support for Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill**

Dear Mark

The Petitions Committee has received the following petition from Richard Jones MBE, which is currently collecting signatures:

**Petition wording**

*We the undersigned call upon Members of the National Assembly for Wales Health and Social Care Committee to vote in favour of the Safe Nursing Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill once it is introduced into the Assembly.*

**Additional Information**

*Kirsty Williams AM is soon going to be introducing the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill into the National Assembly for Wales. This bill would enshrine in law Chief Nursing Officer in Wales' core principles regarding staffing levels on all medical and surgical wards. The Royal College of Nursing believes that this piece of legislation is necessary to improve patient safety and will help to restore patients faith in the Welsh NHS as well as ensuring that patients in hospitals in Wales receive the nursing care and attention they need and deserve and allows Nurses to be able to deliver care to the standard that they are trained and want to deliver.*

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd / Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Ffôn / Tel: 0300 200 6375

E-bost / Email: [SeneddDeisebau@Cynulliad.Cymru](mailto:SeneddDeisebau@Cynulliad.Cymru) / [SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales)

In advance of our first consideration of this petition the Committee would like to seek your views on the issues raised.

Please forward your response to the Clerking Team at  
[SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales)

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Health and Social Services Committee for information as they are currently undertaking Stage 1 scrutiny of the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Powell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'W' and a distinct 'P'.

**William Powell AC / AM**  
Cadeirydd / Chair