

# HPAE

Testimony of

Ann Twomey, President

Senate Legislative Oversight Committee Hearing

Thursday, October 5, 2017

Regarding the NJ Board of Nursing

---

My name is Ann Twomey, President of HPAE, representing more than 13,000 nurses and health professionals in New Jersey. I am here representing the concerns of front line nurses over the underfunding and understaffing of the NJ Board of Nursing. If the Board of Nursing is not provided with the resources it needs to properly oversee the licensing and professional practice standards of 140,000 NJ Registered Nurses, the impact will be felt by New Jersey's families when they are sick and in need of nursing care.

As a union of health professionals, we work with state agencies, professional organizations and front-line nurses on educational programs and policies that set high standards for professional nursing practices. The work of the Board of Nursing is essential in making sure that all nurses have the skills, education and training to meet the highest standards for care. That is equally true for the other professions within the Board's responsibilities.

The Board of Nursing oversees the licensing for all nurses and certified home health aides, establishes educational program and practice standards for these professionals, responds to complaints or disciplinary actions, and sets policy for nursing practice. All of that work is being hindered by short-staffing and systematic and deliberate under-funding of the agency.

The board is so understaffed that some nurses are forced to wait 2 or 3 months to take their licensing exam. In the midst of a nursing shortage, whether they be new graduates or new arrivals for other states or countries— are waiting months to be entered into a data-base so they can take the exam needed to gain a New Jersey license and begin their practice.

This is because the Board no longer employs the necessary qualified staff in sufficient numbers to properly administer the exams.

That's not just a problem for nurses, but it's a problem for patients and for our health care facilities.

If the Board of Nursing does not have the resources it needs to properly oversee the licensing and professional practice standards of 140,000 NJ Registered Nurses, the result is that there will not enough nurses at the bedside to provide the care and treatment patients deserve. Unfortunately, this is the current state of affairs in New Jersey today.



Health Professionals  
and Allied Employees

[www.hpae.org](http://www.hpae.org) 201-262-5005

110 Kinderkamack Road, Emerson, NJ 07630

# HPAE

Additionally, the Board of Nursing is the government entity which monitors education and training programs of healthcare professionals entering the workforce. As the healthcare sector workforce expands to meet the growing demands the Board must have the resources to monitor these programs to ensure there is consistent, appropriate curriculum and meets adequate training requirements to make sure students are prepared to carry out their duties as healthcare professionals. Whether nurses and home health aides are working in the community, hospitals or other nursing facilities patients should have the assurance that every worker has received appropriate training to be able to provide the best care for their patients.

Finally, there are other experts who will testify today on cases of nurses that are the subject of complaints filed with the BON, yet I must mention this as a concern for the nurses HPAE represents.

As a result of the Cullen law, there is a greater reporting requirement to the Board of Nursing by employers for potential infractions of practice standards. We may, and do, disagree with the broad nature of this reporting requirement, but it exists. Once a nurse is reported, he or she may not be permitted to practice while an investigation is underway. They are in limbo and virtually unemployable during this time.

As a union representative, we have seen members wait for more than a year to have their so-called 'day in court'. These cases deserve a thorough investigation, to protect patients, as well as the rights of nurses. In far too many cases, good nurses have had their livelihoods and reputations destroyed, only to have their case overturned while suffering from a delay caused by the lack of staff.

In the midst of a nursing shortage, why has the Christie administration allowed this agency to wither? Each year, more than 140,000 hard-working nurses provide up to \$13 million in revenue through their license application and renewal fees. Isn't that the reason for licensing fee? The nurses pay the fee but the State of NJ fails to allocate these funds to the BON.

Whether a medical emergency, a call button by a hospital patient, or critical home visit for a hospice patient or an elderly person they shouldn't have to wait because our state government didn't think that the work of nurses or the Board of Nursing was important enough to fund.

This is simple to solve – put staff back to work at the Board of Nursing so nurses can get to work too.

Ann Twomey, Pres