

**Letter: Question 1 passage will cripple emergency services – Berkshire Eagle, October 25, 2018**

To the editor:

I am writing to ask people to please vote "No" on Question 1 during the upcoming election. I am an emergency medical service provider with 28 years of experience in Western Massachusetts.

There are many unintended consequences in this bill. One is the requirement to hire, train and assign between 5,000 and 7,000 nurses statewide by Jan. 1, 2019. I am not sure that can even be done, but the consequence that worries me is outside the hospital.

California had a law such as this in place. One of the unintended consequences was EMS crews "holding the wall" in hospital emergency departments. What this means is that when the nurses in the department reach their "patient ratio," they may not take on more patients without discharging or transferring a patient to another unit.

Once that happens, the incoming EMS crews have nobody to turn over care to. This means that they have to stay with their patient, on the ambulance stretcher, in a hallway and monitor that patient until a nurse is below their patient ration and able to take over care of that patient. In California, wait times have reached a high of 11 hours in some cases.

Once enough crews are delayed in the emergency department, there becomes a lack of ambulances available to answer calls from the public.

Imagine calling for an ambulance for a family member with chest pain, and having to wait until a patient is turned over in the hospital to release a crew to respond to your emergency. There is a distinct possibility that people will die awaiting an ambulance because crews are stuck in the hospital "holding the wall."

I suggest that everyone actually read Question 1 and vote "No." Remember, hospital diversion is illegal in Massachusetts, so crews may not bypass a full emergency department to go to one that is able to take more patients. There is also no provision for disasters in the proposed law.

To read more about "holding the wall," search that phrase on the internet. There are several articles regarding the result of a law like Question 1 in California.

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