

## **Letter: Question 1's passage will threaten county dialysis programs – October 27, 2018**

To the editor:

As registered nurses, collectively for over 62 years, we have cared for patients at the bedside most of our careers. Currently, we manage Berkshire Medical Center's dialysis units at four sites across Berkshire County. The Massachusetts Nurses Association has authored ballot Question 1, and they only represent less than 25 percent of all Massachusetts nurses.

Whether a hospital is union or non-union, they will be required to abide by this mandate, if passed. We are voting "No" Question 1 because we feel it is too rigid, and takes the autonomy and decision-making power away from registered nurses who have been trained to make critical decisions for their patients based on ongoing assessments every shift, every day.

Over the past five years, we have had the privilege to work on expanding dialysis services to patients in North Berkshire, and have been on the team that renovated and updated centers to state-of-the-art facilities for dialysis patients across Berkshire County. Berkshire Health Systems committed \$6 million to this project and stayed the course. In our opinion, if Question 1 is passed, projects like this will no longer be feasible, and it is possible a loss of some services currently provided may be at risk if needed RNs to meet these ratios are not available to hire.

If Question 1 is passed, there will be 37 business days to reach mandated ratios. These ratios do not include licensed practical nurses who are currently valued members of our team and perform duties in collaboration with the RNs. The ballot states ratios will need to be maintained "at all times" meaning during meal breaks and when a nurse is required to travel with a patient for a test or during a transfer to another floor. How is this predictable? How is this even plausible? If Question 1 passes, a nurse with an assignment at ratio will not be free to help another nurse who has a patient whose condition has changed and needs more attention. How hospital nurses receive their patient assignments should not involve rigid, government mandated directives, but should take into account each individual patient's ever-changing needs.

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