

**House File 2168 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 2168

BY MASCHER

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act establishing minimum nurse-to-patient ratios for  
2 hospitals.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 135B.35 Nurse-to-patient ratios.

2 1. A hospital shall assign a direct care nurse to no more  
3 than the following number of patients in the specified units  
4 at all times during each shift:

5 a. One patient in a trauma or perioperative unit.

6 b. Two patients in a critical care unit.

7 c. Three patients in an emergency room unit.

8 d. Four patients in a medical-surgical unit.

9 e. Five patients in a rehabilitation unit.

10 f. Six patients in a well-baby nursery unit.

11 2. A "direct care nurse" for purposes of this section  
12 includes a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse  
13 licensed pursuant to chapter 152 or 152E. Licensed practical  
14 nurses may constitute fifty percent or less of the direct care  
15 nurses assigned to patient care on any unit, except where  
16 registered nurses are required. Only registered nurses shall  
17 be assigned to triage patients in emergency room units or to  
18 critical trauma patients.

19 3. A hospital shall not average the number of patients and  
20 the total number of direct care nurses assigned to patients in  
21 a hospital unit during any one shift or over any period of time  
22 for purposes of meeting the requirements under this section.

23 4. The requirements established in this section shall not  
24 apply during a state of emergency if a hospital is requested or  
25 expected to provide an exceptional level of emergency or other  
26 medical services.

27 5. The requirements established in this section do not apply  
28 to entities designated as critical access hospitals pursuant  
29 to 42 U.S.C. §1395i-4. The direct care nurse-to-patient ratio  
30 at a critical access hospital shall follow the standards set  
31 in this section as is reasonable based on the hospital's needs  
32 and capabilities.

33 6. The department of inspections and appeals shall adopt  
34 rules to administer this section.

35

EXPLANATION

H.F. 2168

1           The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
2           the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

3       This bill establishes minimum direct care nurse-to-patient  
4 ratios for specific units within a hospital. The bill provides  
5 that direct care nurses include registered nurses and licensed  
6 practical nurses, but licensed practical nurses can only  
7 account for 50 percent of the direct care nurses assigned in  
8 a unit.

9       The bill contains exceptions for emergencies and critical  
10 access hospitals. The bill directs the department of  
11 inspections and appeals to adopt rules to administer the bill.  
12 The department of inspections and appeals may deny, suspend, or  
13 revoke a license if a hospital substantially fails to comply  
14 with the minimum standards adopted in the bill.