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Comments on AB 313

May 12, 2003

Senate Human Resources and Facilities

Room 2135 – 1:30 pm

Chairman Rawson and Committee Members,

My name is Scott Watts and I am the President of NARA. I am here to let you know that our organization strongly supports Assemblywoman Giunchigliani and Assemblywoman Koivisto's bill - AB 313.

NARA represents over 5,000 retirees and seniors in the State of Nevada. Health issues are the main issues that face our members no matter where they live. Because of the terrible shortage of qualified medical personnel throughout the State, everyone suffers not just our members. There is clearly a lack of qualified nursing staff in almost every facility in Nevada. It doesn't matter whether it is a hospital, a doctor's office or a clinic. In qualified medical personnel's places, there are nursing assistants, nurse's aides and volunteers. And because of this ... patients suffer. Over the years, nurses have been abused, overworked and underpaid for their

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dedication, they receive little recognition or compensation. As you may remember, last year there were stories in the Review Journal addressing the exodus of nurses to other jobs in the area. Nurses are the real people who take care of the ill, no matter what kind of a facility the patients are in. This legislation clarifies staffing plans and the need to have qualified medical personnel tending to patients. It is imperative to have enough nurses on duty to provide quality patient care without overburdening nursing staff.

- One short story – one of our members was hospitalized in Las Vegas and lost 6 pints of blood in an 18 hour period while in the hospital. This was caused mainly due to the lack of qualified nursing staff. The nurse's aides that were assigned to take care of him did nothing as he was bleeding to death, other than writing down the blood loss. His blood pressure got down to 30/60 and he went into septic shock and was moments from death. It was only by a stroke of luck that a Registered Nurse checked on him and took immediate action that probably saved his life. Fortunately there was a qualified nurse in the emergency room where he was sent in the hospital that night. She worked for 8 hours to keep him from dying, and it worked! If it weren't for those two nurses, he would be dead today! SB 313's passage can save lives and will create nursing levels that make sense and protect the care of the patients that they are caring for.

Thank you for your attention.