



# Why Physicians Oppose House Bill 3024

## Background

House Bill (HB) 3024 is currently being debated in the Washington State Legislature. The bill requires nurses and skilled technologists (surgical, radiologic, respiratory care, cardiovascular, and sonographers) to take one 10-minute uninterrupted rest break every four hours, plus a 30-minute uninterrupted meal break.

Breaks can be interrupted only:

- During state or federal emergencies, or
- When there is “a clinical circumstance that may lead to patient harm without the specific skill or expertise of the employee on break.” This exception is very narrow.

## HB 3024 Impedes Safe Patient Care

- Direct caregivers typically take a break when their patients are stable or resting, not according to a predetermined schedule. The ability to set breaks when it is safest for patients will disappear under this bill. The bill removes caregivers’ professional judgment about when interruptions to a break are reasonable, given patient needs. This is an intrusive step for intelligent professionals.
- Caregivers could not leave their break when a family member arrives or when a physician arrives for a long-awaited consultation – even if the caregiver wants to return to the patient.
- Physicians on hospital rounds or returning calls to nurses or technologists will experience serious difficulties. Currently, the primary nurse often returns from his or her break when a physician arrives or returns a call and goes back on break again later. The communication between the primary nurse and the physician is critical for patient safety. Physicians will have two choices: (1) wait until the primary nurse returns, or (2) pass vital communication to the nurse who is just covering the break, but not primarily responsible for the patient.
- Physicians overseeing units when patient needs erupt will be hindered by this bill. Patient needs are fluid, with quiet times and busy times. Typically, no one takes a break during very busy times. Implementing the bill will mean staff will take breaks at a predetermined, prescheduled time – no matter what is happening.

## Get Involved

Call your State Senator **today** and tell them to vote **NO** on HB 3024. **It creates serious patient safety concerns and will disrupt the nurse/physician working relationship.** You can call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000. The operator will look up your legislative district and connect you to your State Senator.

Give your State Senator this message: *“I’m a physician in your district, and I take care of patients in local hospitals (name the hospitals). **Please vote NO on HB 3024.** Nurses and technologists use their professional judgment and put patient needs first. Staff take breaks when patients are stable and when it is safest to take a break, not according to a pre-set schedule. If the bill is enacted, it means when physicians go on rounds or return a call to a primary nurse, that nurse can’t be included in the conversation if he or she is on an uninteruptable break. It means physicians will give instructions to someone not intimately familiar with the patient. This will lead to dangerous communication breakdowns. Our hospital staff are professionals. We don’t need Olympia to micromanage how they do their jobs.”*

