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No on Question 1 – *Do No Harm*

Michael Weekes
President/Publisher

Now here's a question about Question 1 – *the ballot initiative for a government mandated nursing ratio in hospitals* – What do the organizations of the American Nurses Association, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts Medical Society, VNA Care, Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, Massachusetts Society of Anesthesiologists, and over 150 hospitals and health care organizations, physician groups, Chambers of Commerce, and business associations including the Association for Behavioral Healthcare and the Providers' Council, all have in common?

They're all opposed to Question 1 and encouraging Massachusetts residents to *Vote No on 1* on November 6th. They all believe that passing Question 1 will not improve patient care and safety, but in effect, could worsen access and availability in a system that is already stretched in certain circumstances. In a poll released on September 25th by WBUR, Massachusetts voters were di-

vided 44 percent against and 44 percent in favor, with 12 percent undecided.

According to the Coalition to Protect Patient Safety, composed of nurses, hospitals and health care professionals, this law would take away nurses' and doctors' autonomy and decision making "on the ground." With potential fines of \$25,000 per violation per day, these medical professionals could be forced to make decisions based not on the critical need in each unit, but based on a rigid formula.

Does that mean Emergency Rooms could limit patient access to maintain the ratio? Yes. They would potentially just board patients in the ER or send someone in need of a bed elsewhere. And that won't be easy. According to the "No on 1" coalition led by the American Nurses Association, Organization of Nurse Leaders, Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, Coalition of Boston Teaching Hospitals and other concerns, there is currently a shortage of at least 1,200 registered nurses, and hospitals will be forced to hire

6,000 more who just don't exist in our state.

What that means for human services providers, behavioral health and substance abuse providers and all in need of nurses, is that they will likely lose them to hospitals, leading them to reduce beds, increase wait times and/or close programs. I don't see a rational way to mitigate the effect because the nursing staff just isn't there. And that is an intolerable situation for clients, patients and consumers that need services now. It is estimated that 1,000 behavioral beds and many addiction treatment beds needed during this opioid crises could be lost. The rigid staffing ratios must be maintained on every shift, in every hospital, and at all times. It is a one-size-fits-all situation. So if you have a busy ER – but are not so busy in the hospital's other areas – it won't matter if ER wait times are long and patients are essentially boarded there. Perhaps that's one of the reasons that the Emergency Nurses Association in Boston said *No to Question 1* too.

The chief proponent,

the Massachusetts Nurses Association, which represents less than a quarter of Mass. nurses, is well intended in its concern for improving health care. While registered nurses are an essential component of quality health care along with doctors, licensed medical staff, quality hospital facilities and technology, the health care system has to be manageable for optimal care.

Further, the shortage of nurses coupled with a government-mandated staffing ratio has an expected services impact on human services and community health providers who could lose their nurses and thereby lose their service capacity. In addition, Mass Insight estimates implementation costs at about \$1.3 billion, and there's no scientific evidence of its efficacy. This leads us to encourage the voters to *Vote No on 1*. Let's think of a better way to improve care even as Massachusetts has one of the highest rated health care systems in the nation today. Let's adopt this oath for goodness sake and *first, do no harm*.

Yes on Question 3 – It's All About Freedom

Michael Weekes
President/Publisher

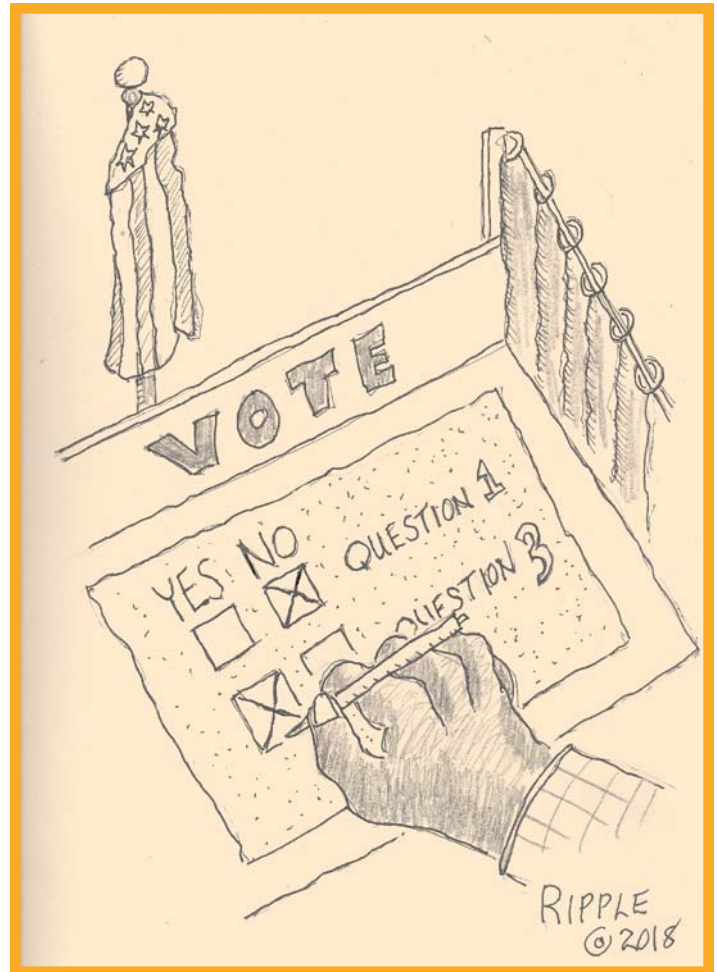
The American way is truly a value system that reflects rights embedded in our Constitution declaring equality for all. It has been grounded in our First Amendment rights for freedom of speech and expression and supported in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banning discrimination in employment based on race, color, sex, religion and national origin. And for those of us, our neighbors, friends and family members who are transgender, protections were specifically codified into a law that went in effect more than two years ago, on October 1, 2016, whereupon Massachusetts also banned discrimination in public accommodations based on gender identity. Sometimes referred to as the “bathroom bill,” it bans discrimination against transgender people in restaurants, public transportation, sporting events, parks, etc. And the Ballot Question 3 challenging their right to freedom should be voted YES, to uphold those protections.

The Providers' Council joins its members Tapestry, Jane Doe, Casa Myrna, PPAL and Roxbury Youthworks,

as well as professional sports teams like the Celtics, Patriots, Bruins, Revolution, and many faith leaders, businesses and elected leaders all in support of the *Freedom For All Massachusetts* campaign to *Vote Yes on Question 3*. Let's make sure identity discrimination in all its forms finds no sanctuary in our Commonwealth. Massachusetts is one of 18 states with an explicit law banning this type of discrimination. But at the same time bills are pending in numerous states like New York, New Jersey, Alabama, Illinois, Texas and others to limit the rights of transgender people. Why? Haven't we learned anything about various forms of identity discrimination and bigotry in this nation?

The Providers' Council's board voted unanimously to endorse the Vote Yes on 3 campaign and urges all of our members, supporters and interested parties to join us. Silly rhetoric about “bathrooms” will never justify gender identity discrimination and our core freedom of expression. **Vote Yes on 3.**

Election Day is Nov. 6



Are you ready for Election Day?

As Massachusetts heads toward the General Election on Tuesday, November 6, here are two items to keep in mind:

- **Register to vote by Oct. 17:** Eligible voters who are not yet registered can do so through Wednesday, Oct. 17.

- **Early voting:** Massachusetts will hold an early voting period from Oct. 22 through Nov. 2 in at least one location in your city or town. Check times and locations at www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elev/evidx.htm



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Oct. 17 – Last day to register to be eligible to vote
Nov. 6

Oct. 22 – Early voting starts

Nov. 6 – Election Day