

# Mandated Healthcare Staffing Ratios Don't Work for Alaska

Alaska has one of the most severe healthcare workforce shortages in the nation – particularly in the nursing profession – with estimates showing a need for over 1,100 new nurses annually to keep up with demand. Staffing mandates don't solve the underlying shortage; they only penalize the healthcare providers trying to manage it.



Photo: PeaceHealth Ketchikan

## What the Data Shows

In the five states that currently have mandated ratios, evidence shows that they undermine clinical decision making, reduce or eliminate hospital services, cut non-clinical employees, and produce longer wait times in crowded emergency rooms.

<p><b>CRITICAL SERVICES CLOSE</b></p>	<p>A 2025 Environmental Scan shows that 17% to 20% of California’s rural community hospitals have <b>dropped obstetrics services</b> within the last decade; <b>closure rates are 3x faster than the national average</b> (<i>CalMatters</i>).</p> <p>Massachusetts reports <b>closures of Labor &amp; Delivery Units and birthing centers</b> to meet mandated staffing standards.</p> <p>A large Oregon provider <b>closed Home Health and Hospice Services</b> across the state, shifting resources to comply with recent mandates.</p>
<p><b>SUBSTANTIAL DELAYS AND INCREASED BOARDING IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM</b></p>	<p>The Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (<i>Chan et al. 2010</i>) found mandated ratios <b>increase wait times in the ER by 16% and increase delays in care by 37%</b>.</p>
<p><b>COMPLIANCE IS TAXING ON HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS</b></p>	<p>The independent state agency Massachusetts Health Policy Commission found in 2018 that full hospital mandated ratios would result in <b>\$676 to \$949 million in new, annual increased healthcare costs</b> for the Massachusetts healthcare system.</p>
<p><b>NON-CLINICAL STAFF FACE ELIMINATION</b></p>	<p>An academic study of California’s Minimum-Nurse-Staffing Legislation and Nurses’ Wages (<i>Mark, Harless, and Spetz, 2009</i>) found <b>ancillary healthcare staff positions were eliminated</b> to fund mandatory nurse hires.</p>
<p><b>NO CORRELATION WITH IMPROVED QUALITY OUTCOMES</b></p>	<p>The National Bureau of Economic Research (<i>Cook, Gaynor, Stephens Jr., Taylor, 2010</i>) found <b>no correlation of improved patient outcomes</b> from mandated staffing ratios.</p>

## The Solutions we Need - Investment & Innovation

Staffing mandates won't solve the underlying workforce shortages in our healthcare system. **We believe the solution lies in investment, not regulation.** Alaska's healthcare industry is actively focused on addressing workforce challenges through strategic investment and statewide collaborative partnerships.



CNA & LPN Pipeline Development	
<p><b>\$1.2M</b></p> <p><b>264</b> Trainees</p> <p><b>3</b> New LPN training sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>264 individuals completed Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) certification training</b> (2022–2025), increasing the number of workers filling this vital role that is in high-demand across care settings in Alaska and is often an entry role to advanced nursing positions (<i>\$800,000 invested to support training.</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Three new LPN training sites</b> in Anchorage, Juneau, and Bethel were developed to increase regional access to nursing education (<i>\$400,000 investment.</i>)</li> </ul>
Workforce Training & Upskilling	
<p><b>82</b> Trainings</p> <p><b>4,727</b> Workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2023, AHHA has supported <b>82 professional development trainings to 4,727 workers</b> across hospitals, nursing homes, and behavioral health facilities. Driven by member-identified priorities, these upskilling initiatives included specialized tracks such as wound care, nurse educator workshops, preceptor training, OB in the ED, and psychiatric nurse certification.</li> </ul>
Facility-Led Retention Initiatives	
<p><b>\$1.17M</b></p> <p><b>16</b> Facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local solutions for workforce stability have addressed critical "pain points," including childcare access, provider burnout, leadership development, and the creation of career ladder opportunities (<i>\$1.17M investment across 16 projects.</i>)</li> </ul>
Workforce Recruitment Campaign	
<p><b>\$400K</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in 2024, the "Find Your Fit" microsite serves as a digital hub connecting students and jobseekers with a wide range of roles in Alaska's hospitals and Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities. The site is supported by an ongoing multimedia promotional campaign. (<i>\$400,000 in federal and state funding.</i>)</li> </ul>