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**Health Care & Wellness  
Committee**

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**HB 3123**

**Brief Description:** Establishing a process to identify best practices related to patient safety.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Morrell, Cody, Roberts, Green and Ormsby.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Provides a statement of legislative intent regarding establishing a mechanism for direct care nurses and hospitals to jointly apply best practices related to patient safety and nurse retention, including nurse staffing.

**Hearing Date:** 1/30/08

**Staff:** Chris Cordes (786-7103).

**Background:**

Department of Health rules require acute care hospitals, among other things, to ensure that qualified and competent staff are available to operate each department. In making its staffing decisions, Washington law does not permit a hospital to require overtime work for licensed practical nurses and registered nurses that work for an hourly wage, except in limited circumstances. One of these exceptions applies if the hospital documents that it made reasonable efforts to obtain staffing. However, a hospital has not used reasonable efforts if overtime work is used to fill vacancies resulting from chronic staff shortages.

An Institute of Medicine (IOM) study, reported in 2004, reviewed the key aspects of a nurse's work environment that were likely to have an impact on patient safety. The IOM report found that the typical nurse work environment has been characterized by many serious threats to patient safety, including long work hours of some nurses, reductions in training and staffing levels, and reductions in time available for monitoring patients. The IOM report made various recommendations on nurse staffing, including recommending that hospitals should use evidence-based nurse staffing practices and perform ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of nurse

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staffing practices, and that there should be a nationwide system for collecting staffing data that is routinely disclosed to the public.

**Summary of Bill:**

A statement of legislative intent recognizes research that demonstrates the critical role registered nurses play in patient safety and quality of care. The Legislature intends to establish a mechanism for direct care nurses and hospitals to jointly apply best practices related to patient safety and nurse retention, including nurse staffing.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.