

**RESOLUTION TO ENSURE HEALTH-CARE WORKERS RECEIVE
UNINTERRUPTED MEAL AND REST BREAKS**

WHEREAS, health care is a human right and Democrats value providing workers with safe working conditions;

WHEREAS, healthcare workers across Washington state currently may be denied uninterrupted meals and rest breaks, putting them at risk for fatigue, which is “the body’s response to sleep loss or to prolonged physical or mental exertion”;¹

WHEREAS, Washington state nurses on-call for emergencies may fill chronic staffing shortages, being called back to work after a 10- or 12-hour shift, a result of the mandatory overtime loophole because in recent years on-call nurses are routinely filling in for chronic shortages when hospitals do not hire enough nurses to cover a shift;

WHEREAS, missed meal and rest breaks are dangerous for patients and create an unsafe work environment, which is well-documented for nurses:

- Nurses intercept 86% of medication errors before there is harm to patients;
- However, risk of medication and other errors increases significantly after 8 hours of work and is even higher after 12.5 hours of work;
- Nurses’ fatigue is “strongly associated with negative impact on nurses’ health and the quality of the patient care they provide[;]”;²
- the rate of employee accidents increases after 9 hours of work and doubles after 12 hours of work;³ and
- Nurses who work shifts of 12.5 hours or longer are three times more likely to miss things which could put patients at risk.

WHEREAS, state legislation is needed to create a safe health care environment for patients and healthcare workers by ensuring health care workers receive their meal and rest breaks, and by closing the mandatory overtime loophole:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 36th District Democrats call upon the 36th legislative district delegation to support and vote for state legislation that requires uninterrupted meal and rest breaks for healthcare workers and closes the mandatory overtime loophole for nurses, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 36th District Democrats will provide notice of this resolution to the 36th legislative district delegation.

Submitted by Summer Stinson, 36th LD Policy Director

¹ Rosenberg, K., *The Joint Commission address health care worker fatigue*, American Journal of Nursing (2014).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*