



## **RCN briefing for Report Stage of the Trade Union Bill in the House of Lords**

With a membership of around 435,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations. The RCN is a politically neutral organisation.

The RCN supports amendment 20 to the Trade Union Bill, and in addition, Directors of Nursing in England are calling on Parliament to reject Clauses 12 and 13 of this bill.

### Amendment 20

LORD KERSLAKE  
BARONESS WATKINS OF TAVISTOCK  
BARONESS HAYTER OF KENTISH TOWN  
LORD STONEHAM OF DROXFORD

Leave out Clause 13

- Patient safety is the single biggest concern of nursing staff. This amendment addresses the RCN's concerns, raised at every stage of the bill, that the risk in giving the Minister a power to cap facility time is a risk to patient safety in the health sector.
- Every workplace is different and facility time arrangements are best agreed between employers and trade unions, depending on their circumstances. The RCN is clear that facility time must not be prescribed and is calling on Members of the House of Lords to consider the attached letter, which shows the strength of feeling among Directors of Nursing for rejecting clause 13.

- Facility time is fundamental for supporting both employers and staff through workplace changes and service redesign. The ability of the health service to transform and improve without protected facility time for union representatives is a significant cause for concern. Without it, costs will undoubtedly be increased to employers, as they will be required to make alternative provision.
- The RCN reiterates its view that the unintended consequence of clause 13 are that it would increase costs to UK taxpayers. The RCN believes it highly unlikely that the Government would support a clause that increased cost to the public purse in the current climate of financial austerity.

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For further information please contact:

Stephanie McMeeken

RCN Parliamentary Officer

[stephanie.mcmeeken@rcn.org.uk](mailto:stephanie.mcmeeken@rcn.org.uk)

020 7647 3629