Good morning. I am Mary Pynn. I am vice president and chief nursing quality officer for HealthEast Care System.

As we discuss this proposed legislation, it’s important to keep in mind that there is unanimous agreement on a key point: Registered nurses are critical to what we do. Nurses in Minnesota hospitals are highly regarded for their professionalism. In turn, job satisfaction among nurses ranks very high. HealthEast nurses, for example, report high levels of satisfaction as employees; this fall, for the seventh time, our employees voted us Best Place To Work in a Minneapolis – St. Paul Business Journal survey. The same could be said for health care organizations around the state.

Our commitment to attracting and retaining the best nurses in the country is not just empty rhetoric. Hospitals increasingly are relying on a care-delivery model built on shared decision-making. Nurses are central to enhancing quality and implementing best practices in our care delivery.

In order to attract and retain the best, we understand that we must offer nationally competitive compensation packages. I have been directly involved for many years in negotiating contracts between MNA nurses and the six largest Twin Cities hospital systems, including HealthEast.

As you may know, this past fall, the Twin Cities hospitals proposed a streamlined process to negotiate and settle a new three-year contract with MNA. We felt it important that during this time of significant change in the health care system, our entire team be focused on maintaining our nation-leading quality care while improving patient satisfaction and reducing the overall cost of care. We are pleased the MNA accepted our offer of early negotiations. Collaboratively, we were able to reach a fair agreement on a new contract nearly six months before the existing contract expires.

The contract will continue to make MNA nurses in Twin Cities hospitals among the best compensated in the country. Today – before the new contract goes into effect – the average hourly rate for an MNA nurse working in a Twin Cities hospital is more than $44. Annualized, this rate translates into a salary of $91,693.

To put that in perspective, according to comparable data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly rate for registered nurses nationally is $29.03 or, on an annualized basis, $60,390 – about two-thirds of the MNA rate in Twin Cities hospitals.

It’s also important to note that the new contract leaves intact the MNA’s defined benefit pension plan, health coverage and other benefits.

Finally, I also want to remind the committee of two additional points. First, as part of collective bargaining, hospitals and the MNA create internal teams to address issues like staffing. And, second, we at HealthEast – and the same is true at many other hospitals – negotiate with
multiple unions. We are respectful of all our relationships. This quota legislation, if approved, will affect every single hospital employee and will be harmful to many. I urge the Legislature to not impose an agenda of one union on other employees and their unions, especially when it will be to the disadvantage of hospitals, patients and the communities we serve.

Thank you.