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MARKETPLACE MORNING REPORT

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New legislation would prohibit nurses from working more than 12 hours  
in a 24-hour period

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BODY:

KAI RYSSDAL, anchor:

You get tired, you make mistakes. Generally not a big problem. But in some professions fatigue can be just plain dangerous. A bill to be introduced in Congress today would limit overtime for hospital nurses. From the MARKETPLACE health desk at WGBH, Helen Palmer reports.

HELEN PALMER reporting:

The nation's hospitals are short 126,000 nurses. One way that administrators fill the gaps is by demanding nurses work overtime, sometimes back-to-back eight-hour shifts. But the Journal of the American Medical Association reported last October that nurses working too many hours caring for too many patients increased patient mortality by nearly a third. And such conditions, say nurses, also contribute to staff burnout which in turn adds to the nursing shortage.

The Safe Nursing and Patient Care Act, being introduced today, would prohibit nurses from working more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period. While enrollment in nursing schools is increasing, the federal government still predicts a shortage of 800,000 nurses by 2020. And cutting overtime will make that shortfall worse. In Boston, I'm Helen Palmer for MARKETPLACE.

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