

# **WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION**

## **RESOLUTION #2**

### **FOREIGN-EDUCATED NURSES**

- WHEREAS, The growing nursing shortage and changes to US trade agreements have given rise to increasing efforts by US health care employers and others to recruit, hire and utilize foreign educated registered nurses (RNs) as a means of addressing their need for more RNs, and
- WHEREAS, The US health care industry has a long history of relying on foreign educated nurses during times of nursing shortage and foreign nurses are able to enter the US using permanent and temporary visas and through trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and
- WHEREAS, Many foreign-educated nurses graduate from programs taught in English and similar in content to those taught in the United States, also come from countries with shortages of their own, and
- WHEREAS, The WSNA supports ANA and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in recognizing the right of individual nurses to migrate while condemning the practice of recruiting registered nurses to countries where authorities have failed to address problems which cause nurses to leave the profession and discourages them from returning, and
- WHEREAS, WSNA condemns employer recruitment and utilization of registered nurses from countries with their own RN shortages as being both unethical and dangerous to the quality and access to care for citizens in those countries, and
- WHEREAS, Some Washington health-care employers are currently spending substantial sums of money on foreign recruitment, including relocation costs; attorney fees; immigration, visa and licensing expenses; temporary housing and other activities to assist the foreign nurse with acclimating to the United States and the local community rather than supporting nurse retention by investing in the RNs within their community through higher wages, better hours and other workplace supports, and

WHEREAS, Opportunistic educational and recruitment scams are emerging in many US border-states that exploit foreign nurses by virtue of their employer-dependent immigration status and willingness to work for less than prevailing area wages, and

WHEREAS, WSNA has longstanding positions promoting the availability of the best possible quality nursing care to Washington state citizens as well as support for the economic and general welfare needs and interests of all registered nurses, and

WHEREAS, Reliance on foreign-educated nurses as a long term solution to the rapidly worsening nursing shortage and safe staffing needs in Washington State is short-sighted and unacceptable,

BE IT THEREFORE

RESOLVED, That WSNA support the right of individual nurses to immigrate to Washington state, including limited recruitment of RNs only from countries where there is an abundance of RNs and where the educational preparation of these foreign nurses is comparable to those of nurses educated in the United States, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA continue to support high standards of nursing education and nursing practice and support regulations that assure that foreign nurses recruited from other countries are clinically competent and fluent in speaking, writing and understanding English, including use of both general English and health care abbreviations and terminology, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA support ensuring that nurses wishing to immigrate to Washington state have met all regulatory and educational requirements which are required of RNs educated in the United States, and that they have the necessary support for their cultural transition, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA monitor Washington health care employers' recruitment, hiring and utilization of foreign educated nurses and educate WSNA members to be watchful in their workplace to assure that:

- there is no discrimination or exploitation of foreign educated nurses
- foreign educated nurses are paid the same, have the same responsibilities and receive the same benefits as other RNs in the facility

- WSNA Contract provisions are not violated,
- employers are accountable for filing the attestations and informing prospective foreign nurses of their rights,
- immigration is not used as a means of abrogating the workforce/workplace rights of domestic nurses or for circumventing job actions or labor disputes, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA work collaboratively through the Washington Nursing Leadership Council, the legislature and with other groups to develop comprehensive strategies to obviate the need for employers to rely on importation and use of foreign educated nurses, including encouraging employers to invest in their communities by providing financial support for innovative community-based recruitment and funding of education for nursing students and effective retention of practicing nurses within the local health care system, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the General Assembly encourage the WSNA Cabinet on E&GW to develop strategies that challenge health care employers to place a higher priority on retaining and attracting nurses within the U.S. before soliciting the import of foreign nurses, and be it further

RESOLVED, That WSNA support and encourage efforts by healthcare organizations to create “Magnet” work and care environments in their own communities that demonstrate respect and economic value of RNs and are conducive to safe, quality nursing practice.

### **Justification:**

Increasingly, hospitals across the state are turning to recruitment of foreign-educated nurses to help ease their need for nurses to fill vacant positions. Many of these foreign-educated nurses come from countries with severe nursing shortages in spite of increased costs and impact on the supply in other countries

### **Proposed Implementation Activities**

WSNA will document and monitor the hiring and utilization of foreign nurses in Washington State. WSNA will assist nurses and the media in preparing informational articles identifying the issues and concerns about long-term reliance on foreign-educated nurses to address the nursing shortage. At the same time, WSNA will

work with nursing organizations, healthcare and advocacy groups and other policymakers to promote and encourage efforts by healthcare employers to adopt alternatives that support long-term solutions to the nursing shortage.

**Possible Benefits:**

Increased employer, public and policy-maker support for long term, cost effective, community-based solutions to the nursing shortage and the appropriate use of foreign-educated nurses that is not exploitive and does not erode the health care systems of other nations.

**Range of Direct Costs:**

Direct costs would range from \$5,000 to \$8,000 for costs of documenting, monitoring and evaluating the recruitment, hiring and utilization of foreign-educated nurses; Additional include costs of activities related to:

- Staff time to develop briefing materials and media strategies
- Staff time to continue the staff work with the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission and other regulatory agencies
- Continued work with WNLC, employers and other groups to develop comprehensive strategies to address the nursing shortage
- Lobbyist time as needed

**Adopted by WSNA General Assembly, May 2, 2003**