RIGHTS OF INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED NURSES

WHEREAS, WSNA represents nurses from a wide variety of countries working in Washington state, including the Philippines, China, India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and others; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. healthcare system has frequently turned to recruitment of nurses from other countries to fill vacant positions; and

WHEREAS, during the current nurse-staffing crisis, many hospitals and other employers have resumed such efforts; and

WHEREAS, internationally educated nurses work alongside U.S.-educated nurses in delivering patient care services; and

WHEREAS, in some instances, these nurses are employed by recruitment agencies for multi-year contracts, rather than being hired directly by the hospitals in which they are working, which leaves those nurses outside of union bargaining units and thus without the benefits, pay, and protections of collective bargaining agreements; and

WHEREAS, some employers have not equitably accounted for, internationally educated nurses’ prior nursing experience in crediting their years of experience; and

WHEREAS, internationally educated nurses have at times faced abusive and exploitive conditions, including high damages for terminating contracts; payment of substandard wages; and intimidation for speaking out against such practices, and some nurses have successfully challenged such practices in federal court (Pagurigan v. Prompt Nursing Employment Agency, 2021) and through state attorney general offices (James, 2021); and

WHEREAS, many employers fail to provide needed orientation to assist in adapting to their new environments and healthcare practices; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance for Ethical Recruitment has issued a Health Care Code for Ethical International Recruitment and Employment Practices based on principles that include:

- Recruiter and employer accountability;
- Freedom from discrimination and retaliation;
- The right to receive a contract with fair terms and to give informed consent;
- The right to move freely without economic coercion;
- The right to access justice;
- The right to freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- The right to receive support for clinical and cultural integration; and
- Respect for sending [source] countries; and

BE IT THEREFORE:

RESOLVED, that WSNA supports ethical and equitable recruitment of internationally educated nurses; and be it further
RESOLVED, that WSNA welcomes internationally educated nurses as our colleagues in providing the best care possible for our patients; and be it further

RESOLVED, that while recognizing the rights of all nurses to migrate, WSNA also finds that international recruitment is not a substitute for addressing the poor working conditions that have exacerbated the nurse staffing crisis; and be it

RESOLVED, that WSNA supports efforts to ensure that recruitment efforts take into account the healthcare workforce needs of source countries; and be it

RESOLVED, that WSNA opposes all abusive and exploitive practices, including the use of long-term contracts with high damages for termination; payment of substandard wages; inadequate living conditions; and threats of deportation or other penalties related to advocating for better conditions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSNA supports including internationally educated nurses as members of the bargaining unit where one exists; and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSNA supports equitable credit for nursing experience acquired in other countries; and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSNA will develop and disseminate a position statement putting forward our positions on internationally educated nurses; and be it further

RESOLVED, that WSNA will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with nursing organizations representing nurses of various nationalities in order to advocate for the rights of all nurses, regardless of country of origin or education.

REFERENCES:


Submitted by:
Cabinet on Economic & General Welfare on 02-06-2023
WSNA Board of Directors