

November 21, 2022

Jeff Tomlin, MD
CEO
EvergreenHealth
By email only:

Re: Evergreen Hospital and WSNA – proposal to reopen wages

Dear Dr. Tomlin,

I am counsel to the Washington State Nurses Association. As I'm sure you are aware – and I know this topic has been discussed in both the Staffing and Conference Committees – the market for nurses in Seattle and the surrounding areas has shifted dramatically since the current collective bargaining agreement was bargained just months ago. Several hospitals at which WSNA represents nurses have requested to initiate wage reopeners or have requested to commence early collective bargaining in order to provide additional raises now so that they may hold on to existing nurses as well as to remain competitive with numerous other local acute care facilities. Just this past week, Overlake Hospital announced that it would apply a \$5/hour increase to all wage steps effective January 2023, and would increase the contractual March 2023 increase to 4%, up by an additional .5%. As of January 2023, Overlake Hospital will have the highest base wage in the state, eclipsing even Seattle Children's Hospital.

While the raises Evergreen and WSNA negotiated in 2021 were competitive at the time, Evergreen has significantly fallen behind since. The Hospital has not only fallen behind in the Seattle market, but is now trailing several hospitals in the Tacoma market as well.

To better illustrate this point, I am attaching spreadsheets with wage comparisons for 2022 and 2023. As you can see, in the second column are Evergreen's current wage rates (the "0%" next to "Raise" indicates what the contractual rates are without any additional raise). Moving to the right across the spreadsheet, you see the wage scales for eight hospitals in Seattle, Tacoma, and the surrounding areas. On the first page, entitled "2022 Wage Comps," Evergreen is behind every hospital listed at the base wage with the exception of Virginia Mason. This remains more or less consistent through Step 10; after that, Evergreen begins to zig-zag with some hospitals. However, as you can see from the column sixth to the right entitled "Average," Evergreen falls below the average wage at every single step except for Step 18. As of January 2023, Evergreen will trail Overlake's wages by as much as 12.5% at the base wage, but never less than 5.9%. By May 2023, the wage disparity will increase by an additional .5%. The five columns to the far right depict the percentage differences between the average rates for all 10 hospitals, and then as individually compared to UW Montlake, Children's, Swedish, and Evergreen.

The second spreadsheet, entitled “2023 Wage Comps,” depicts how Evergreen’s rates compare if there were no additional raises beyond the current contractual rates in either 2022 or 2023. Here, Evergreen’s rates fall even further behind. Notably, as you can see in the far-right columns, Evergreen’s base rate is 6.4% behind the average of the other hospitals, nearly 6.7% behind UW Montlake, 12.5% behind Swedish, and 18.3% behind Children’s (an annual difference of \$13,403.52 for a .9 FTE nurse fresh out of school).

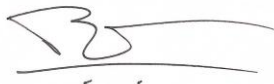
All of this information is available on the representing unions’ websites for you to access as well.

Again, I know that you have been engaged in casual discussions at the facility level. I am providing you with this level of detail so that you have the same information WSNA has been poring over with other hospitals. At each set of negotiations, both WSNA and the hospital have the shared primary goal of recruit and retain. We are firm in our belief that there are enough RNs licensed in Washington; we believe that we need to partner with hospitals to entice them back, whether from traveling, early retirement, or something else. Looking at the current and 2023 rates, I am concerned that these wages will pull nurses elsewhere and not to Evergreen.

We hope that you consider this invitation to reopen the contract for the purposes of negotiating wages in the spirit in which it is sent – WSNA wants Evergreen nurses to remain Evergreen nurses, and we want to reduce the reliance on travelers and have more RNs join the Evergreen family. If we wait two years from now at the contract’s expiration to negotiate new wages, I fear we will have missed this opportunity.

I look forward to continuing this conversation.

Regards,



Pamela Devi Chandran
Labor Counsel
Washington State Nurses Association

C: Mary Shepler, CNO at EvergreenHealth
Jessika Groce, Chief Human Resources Officer at EvergreenHealth
Union Officers:
Theresa Blazer, Chair
Holly Baker, Treasurer
Sandy Gott, Grievance Officer
Jayson Dick, WSNA Director of Labor Advocacy
Bret Percival, RN, WSNA Nurse Representative