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Gov. Gregoire brings together groups on first-in-the-nation nurse staffing agreement

For Immediate Release: February 4, 2008

OLYMPIA – Gov. Gregoire today witnessed the signing of a landmark agreement between Washington state hospitals and major nurse organizations intended to enhance patient safety by improving hospital staffing policies.

The agreement was signed by the Washington State Hospital Association, Northwest Organization of Nurse Executives, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, United Staff Nurses Union, Local 141 UFCW, and the Washington State Nurses Association. It is the first of its type in the nation and is a major step in the parties' five-year effort to address this issue.

“Patient safety is one of my top priorities,” said Gregoire. “Improving patient safety is the next logical step in

improving our health care system, along with the work we have been doing over the past three years to improve quality and access.”

The agreement was signed in conjunction with agreed-upon legislation to be heard in the Senate on Monday afternoon. It calls for nurses and administrators at each hospital in the state to work collaboratively to develop a staffing plan that supports the well-being of staff and in-turn promotes patient safety.

The parties will then continue to work together to identify the key indicators of quality that are related to nurse staffing and use those indicators as a basis for improvement in the health care delivery system, develop a clearinghouse of best practices to provide information statewide regarding staffing policies and quality care, and examine the role of nurse staffing in medical errors so that in the future such errors can be prevented before they occur.

The governor thanked the UW/WSU William D. Ruckelshaus Center for their role in bringing together the organizations to agree on a path to their common goal.

“SEIU nurses are excited about this opportunity to deliver high quality nursing care through this legislation and partnership. Washington hospital patients will be the beneficiary of this effort,” said Diane Sosne, president, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW.

“Research confirms that nursing care has a direct impact on quality of hospital care and patient safety. This agreement marks a concerted effort by all the parties to address the critical issue of safe nurse staffing. WSNA is encouraged by the progress made thus far and looks forward to collaborating on meaningful solutions to enhance the safety of our patients and improving the workplace for nurses,” said Judy Huntington, MN, RN, executive director, Washington State Nurses Association.

“This is an historic agreement between nurses and hospitals and demonstrates all our commitment to improve health care for the people of our state,” said Leo Greenawalt, president, Washington State Hospital Association. “The agreement we have reached addresses many important issues related to nursing, and ensures our state will continue to provide high quality care for the patients we have now and into the future.”

Earlier this morning Gregoire received a Special Recognition Award from the Washington State Nurses Association at their 26th Annual Nurses Legislative Day. This afternoon the governor will share her vision of healthcare in their state at the Washington State Medical Association Legislative Summit.

This legislative session the governor is proposing the following; funding innovative partnerships to train health care workers to become registered nurses so we have more health professionals to fill these jobs, a plan to ensure all healthcare providers moving to Washington from another state are well-qualified, funding national criminal background checks for all out-of-state applicants seeking to become licensed health-care providers in Washington, rigorously investigating complaints against health-care providers, providing real-time information to reduce medication errors, requiring all hospitals to report adverse events to the public, and increasing licensing standards for registered counselors.



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