



PAMBANSANG SAMAHAN NG MGA NARS NG PILIPINAS, INC.

(PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.)

Member, INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

1663 F.T. Benitez St.,
Malate, Manila 1004
Philippines

Telephone: 5210937 / 4004430
Telefax: 5251596
E-mail Address: philippinenursesassociation@yahoo.com.ph
Website: www.pna-ph.org

PRESS Statement

PNA REITERATES SALARY GRADE 15 FOR NURSES

The Philippine Nurses Association remains steadfast in its call for the immediate implementation of the Nursing Law of 2002 (RA 9173) particularly the provision setting the government nurse's entry level at Salary Grade 15. We do not support and agree to the proposed salary scheme crafted by the DBM now being read in both Houses of Congress and Senate that pegs the entry level of nurses to Salary Grade 11 or just one notch above the present level. In numerical terms, Salary Grade 11 means additional Php6,000 spread in 4 years. There is also the likelihood that all the cash benefits now being received by government nurses under the Magna Carta of Public Health Workers (RA 7305) will be subsumed in the salary package thus lessening the real value of the offer.

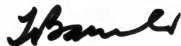
The Nursing Law has been gathering dust in the executive branch specifically the Department of Budget & Management (DBM) for seven years now. This fundamental instrument crafted by our nursing leaders with much sweat and tears and which the State "guaranteed to uphold" as signed by President Arroyo herself, an honorary nurse, will now be swept under the rug by a mere Resolution that sets the salary scale of government employees. The Salary Grade 15 entry level stipulated in the Nursing Law was arrived at after judicious and painstaking study of what nursing practice requires. A government nurse performs critical job functions that have life and death implications not only for the patient or client but for the nurse practitioner herself. The nurse's exposure to communicable disease like swine flu (A H1N1 virus) during long, even extended hours of duty, not to mention the erratic and irregular schedule, makes nursing practice a special profession.

Nurses working conditions are going from bad to worse. In contrast to the ideal ratio of nurse-patient ratio of 1:15 based on DOH, in actuality, 1 nurse takes care of 40-80 patients, and sometimes even 150 patients in an 8-hour duty. This exploitative condition saves the government money: instead of hiring 5-6 nurses to take care of 40-80 patients, only 1 nurse is hired to do the job. These conditions give the nurses all the reasons to demand the implementation of Salary Grade 15 specified in the Nursing Law.

Obviously, these special built-in qualities and work conditions in a nursing job are not recognized and even acknowledged by those who crafted the proposed salary increase scheme that shall adjust their present salary range of 12,000 to something like 18,000 per month. Of course, in real terms this would even be less if the compulsory taxes are deducted from the pay check of the nurse. Grimmer if taken alongside the P27,100 minimum income for a family of five to live above subsistence level (National Wage and Productivity Commission, September 2008).

Again, as in the past seven years, nurses are being tossed around and given the short end of the deal under the guise of “equity, benchmarking, wage distortion, etc.” that some legislators and government apologists are using to waterdown our legitimate demand for the implementation of Salary Grade 15. Still, there are positive possibilities borne by our renewed diligence to assert our rights before the public and the lawmaking bodies that made some legislators listen more keenly, thus, champion our calls and petitions on the floor. Notable are Senators Peter Cayetano and Pia Cayetano who made point-by-point interpellation in our favor. In the lower chamber are Party list representatives Satur Ocampo, Liza Masa, Luz Ilagan, together with Reps. Teofisto Guingona Jr., Rufus Rodriguez, and Carlos Padilla among others. Maybe we can return the favor to them in 2010.

All told, we seem to be losing some battles on this important issue of economic welfare of nurses. But the war is not yet over. Because we are on the side of justice and our cause is not just the cause of nurses but of other health workers as well, and more importantly, the people we serve --- we should plod on. We must continue to harness our ranks and consolidate our actions for these shall spell the difference in the end: the strong, collective strength of informed and empowered nursing masses.



Teresita I. Barcelo, PhD, RN
National President
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