



Legislation Text

File #: 67100, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No appropriation required.

Title

Calling for a Fair and Fast Union Election for Nurses at University of Wisconsin Health to Ensure Quality Patient Care

Body

WHEREAS, the registered nurses at University of Wisconsin Health have always been essential for the health, safety and well-being of our community; and,

WHEREAS, during the ongoing pandemic, they have been on the front lines, risking their lives and their families' lives to provide quality, compassionate patient care to all in Dane and surrounding counties; and,

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has intensified deep-seated, systemic problems in the UW Health system, which have been worsening for years, ever since the administration stopped recognizing the nurses' union; and,

WHEREAS, for decades, nurses had a strong union and a solid contract, and were able to work collaboratively with management--without fear of retaliation--to ensure the highest standards of excellence at UW Health; and,

WHEREAS, after passage of the anti-worker Wisconsin law Act 10, the administration failed to negotiate a new agreement with the nurses' union when their contract expired in 2014; and,

WHEREAS, since then nurses have been struggling with deteriorating staff-to-patient ratios, decreased continuing education benefits, rising healthcare costs, issues with scheduling, difficulties with recruitment and retention, and have had no independent voice to resolve these issues; and,

WHEREAS, the pandemic continues to aggravate the crisis-level [nursing shortage](#) in our state, in which there could be 10,000 empty positions by the end of this decade; and,

WHEREAS, the strong majority of nurses signed cards in 2019 expressing their desire to be represented by SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin, and presented those cards to the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority board, but the board refused to recognize their union; and,

WHEREAS, the foremost labor attorneys in the state have thoroughly reviewed current law, including Act 10, and concluded that UW Health can voluntarily recognize nurses as a union and start negotiating a new contract immediately; and,

WHEREAS, as the preeminent healthcare system, a public authority that utilizes city services, and one of the largest employers in our state, UW Health has a responsibility to lead; and,

WHEREAS, in order to address the growing problems at UW Health, help solve the nursing shortage, and ensure the highest quality patient care, nurses must be able to have an independent voice through a union should they so choose; and,

WHEREAS, it is a moral imperative for UW Health nurses to have the freedom to decide on their own whether to unionize, just like other nurses in Madison, so they can advocate effectively for themselves, their families, their patients and our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Madison Common Council fully supports nurses' efforts to form a union, and calls on the UWHCA board to hold a fair and fast union election by the end of this year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council urges the UWHCA board and UW Health administration to work collaboratively with nurses and their representatives to develop a fair union election process without delay.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this election process needs to include prohibitions on any management interference, intimidation or campaigning against unionization efforts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that nurses must be able to make up their own minds in a free and open atmosphere, without divisive scare tactics that distract from healthcare delivery, waste taxpayer dollars and squander precious patient care resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the majority of nurses who participate in the election choose to be represented by a union, the Council calls on the administration to immediately begin negotiations in good faith and expeditiously settle a fair contract, to ensure UW Health is the very best place to work and receive care.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to all UWHCA board members, UW Health Chief Executive Officer Alan Kaplan, the Madison legislative delegation and all statewide elected officials.

Sources

<https://wicenterfornursing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/wisconsin-nursing-supply-demand-forecast-2018-2040.pdf>