Oregon AFSCME and ONA Joint Statement on OHSU Covington Report

For Immediate Release: December 14, 2021

The Dec. 9 release of the Covington report is a significant moment in OHSU’s history. The report validates every single OHSU employee and stakeholder who has attempted to report misconduct to protect themselves and the entire OHSU community from bad actors. We are thankful that former Attorney General Eric Holder and his team were thorough and thoughtful in their approach to the investigation.

For decades, rank-and-file employees, stewards and union staff have sounded the alarm that OHSU has deep-rooted institutional problems with sexual harassment, racism, discrimination, bullying and retaliation. Our attempts to warn OHSU’s leadership of these problems and protect workers were consistently met with scorn, retaliation and gaslighting by the institution and its leadership.

It is not lost on the thousands of workers represented by ONA and Oregon AFSCME that OHSU spent significant resources on a report that told them what employees and stakeholders had been reporting, with supporting documentation, for years. Many of the employees who came forward did so during the most traumatic and terrible experiences of their lives. Yet the vast majority of these individuals were disregarded, retaliated against or further traumatized by OHSU’s response.

If OHSU is to live up to its “Respect for All” branding and its reputation as a place of healing, then the leaders and managers who have fostered the institution’s toxic culture must be held accountable and the victims must be made whole.

We have heard too many empty apologies from OHSU’s executives; we demand accountability for bad actors and immediate action on the recommendations of the Covington report, including:

- Publicly announce an action plan consisting of measurable goals and tangible steps to be taken in addressing these serious problems
- Provide members a meaningful role in crafting solutions to the problems raised in the Covington report as well as in assessing the success of OHSU’s efforts to address these problems

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