October 2, 2020

Lorinda Bergen, CEO
Willamette Valley Medical Center
2700 SE Straus Ave
McMinnville, OR 97128

Jenie White, Chair
Willamette Valley Medical Center Bargaining Unit Executive Team
Oregon Nurses Association
18765 SW Boones Ferry Rd, Suite 200
Tualatin, OR 97062

Dear Ms. Bergen and Ms. White,

I write to encourage Willamette Valley Medical Center (WVMC) and the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) to negotiate employment contracts between the ONA-represented nurses and WVMC in good faith and as soon as possible. WVMC and ONA share the goals of providing the best possible care for patients and a safe working environment for nurses. I’m hopeful that these shared goals can inspire a timely resolution of contract negotiations.

Since the earliest days of the pandemic, I’ve had the opportunity to connect with Oregonians from around the district I’m honored to represent. I’ve heard from families struggling with the loss of a job, and I’ve talked to people who have lost loved ones. First responders and health care workers are worried about PPE shortages and bringing COVID-19 home to their loved ones. I’ve spoken with hospital executives concerned about access to supplies and testing materials, who are up every night worried about hospital capacity and having the workforce to respond to the many challenges the pandemic has wrought. In every sector, I’ve seen challenge and heartbreak. I’ve also seen innovation, collaboration, and countless examples of people working together, stepping up to help someone in need, or solving a problem together. This is the spirit of the Oregon that I know.

I urge you to bring this Oregon spirit to your negotiations, and recognize that you have more in common than not, and that the success of the hospital is directly related to the success of its workforce. Nurses are on the front lines of the health care system and are essential in every part of the system, including in the care and experience of each patient and their family or loved ones. Nurses come to work at significant personal risk, particularly during a pandemic. They know each patient’s needs inside and out, and have a vital perspective on safe staffing and quality care. They are dedicated to patients, and they value the community at WVMC and in Yamhill County.

I encourage ONA and WVMC to negotiate contracts in good faith as quickly and amiably as possible. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please direct questions or updates to Sarah Baessler in my Oregon office. She may be reached by emailing sarah.baessler@mail.house.gov or by phone at 503-469-6010.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress