



July 7, 2017

Honorable Pinarayi Vijayan
Chief Minister of Kerala
141, 3rd Floor, North Block
Government Secretariat
Thiruvananthapuram
India – 695001
chiefminister@kerala.gov.in

Dear Chief Minister Vijayan,

On behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, which includes more than 130,000 nurses and other healthcare professionals, I write to express our unwavering support for the Kerala nurses who have begun a dharna protest in front of the government secretariat. We urge you to settle the dispute with the United Nurses Association regarding nurse wages to avoid work stoppages in the hospitals.

It seems a solution could be easily reached. We understand that a 2016 Supreme Court-appointed special committee provided explicit direction to all state governments to ensure all nurses of equivalent standing are treated equally in terms of salary. Yet, a gross disparity still remains, as some hospitals are blatantly violating this directive. You simply cannot allow this violation of a clear court order to continue.

At a time when illnesses and deaths from H1N1, dengue fever and other diseases are reaching endemic levels, the government should be taking all measures to ensure that those who care for the ill are compensated sufficiently to be able to care for themselves and their families. To do otherwise not only is an injustice to the nurses and their families, but exacerbates a critical public health situation and puts more lives at risk.

Again, we strongly urge you to negotiate with the United Nurses Association and the Kerala nurses to ensure they receive fair and equal salaries as mandated by the court. If healthcare workers cannot afford to care for themselves, patient care and community health will undoubtedly suffer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Candice Owley
AFT Vice President

President, Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals

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American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
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