

1493 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 (617) 498-1000

June 1, 1989

Mr. Robert W. Healy, City Manager
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

I am writing in response to City Council Order Number 9, 12/19/88, regarding the recruitment of nurses from other countries. The concern expressed by Councillor Walsh relative to the crisis that hospitals have been confronted with due to nursing personnel shortages is shared by everyone within the health care industry. As outlined in the Secretary of Health and Human Services Commission on Nursing Final Report issued by Otis Bowen, M.D. in December, 1988, "the shortage of RNs is real, widespread, and of significant magnitude". The Commission, in addition to detailing the causes and possible outcomes of this shortage, advances sixteen (16) specific recommendations and a significant number of directed strategies to alleviate the shortage. Recruitment of nursing personnel from other countries was not a recommendation of this Commission.

The primary reason for not recruiting nurses from abroad by the Cambridge Hospital has been based upon the experience of the approximately 10% of hospitals in the United States who have attempted such a program. While some hospitals have been successful, most have not for the following reasons:

- 1) High Costs. Due to legal, transportation, housing, and training costs above and beyond salaries, this approach can in fact be more costly than reliance upon agency personnel.
- 2) Quality. Some of the countries with nurses interested in working in the U.S. have inadequate training programs for nurses. Many nurses have presented a variety of quality of care problems for those hospitals. Although additional training in the U.S. prior to working is usually required prior to licensure, many overseas recruits have been unable to measure up academically.
- 3) Unreliability. Many young nurses from abroad do not prosper in the U.S. due to unhappiness associated with being away from their home and family for an extended period. Many, in fact, terminate their contracts and return home.

Despite the negative feedback received relative to recruitment abroad, this hospital's nursing recruitment staff did participate in a well-publicized Recruitment Fair in Puerto Rico. They unfortunately returned from their trip without one hire and could only reinforce our attitude against overseas recruitment.

Finally, and possibly most importantly from a philosophical standpoint, the recruitment of foreign nurses by U.S. hospitals has been targetted in several countries; e.g. the Phillipines, Canada, England, and Ireland. Some of these countries are now experiencing nursing shortages of their own without the financial ability to recruit from other countries with a possible surplus of trained nurses. The crisis we face is now being faced by some of these countries.

To address the impact of this shortage on the Cambridge Hospital specifically, our Recruitment and Retention Committee has worked on a variety of initiatives, many of which have been endorsed by the aforementioned Commission. The changes we have implemented have been focused on the more efficient use of scarce RN resources, recognition of nursing competence through career ladders, greater involvement of nurses in decision and policy making, and compensation. Our efforts have also been buoyed by the otherwise disastrous health care economic climate which is in fact contributing to improved availability of nurses. I am pleased to report to you that we have reduced our reliance upon agency nurses from approximately twenty-six full time equivalents (FTE's) eighteen months ago to only thirteen FTE's today. We also anticipate that by September, 1989, we will not need to extend approximately six of these contract personnel leaving only several agency personnel as part of our staffing complement.

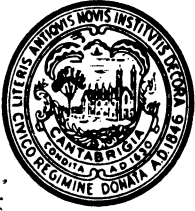
Please contact me if you have any further questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



John G. O'Brien
Hospital Administrator

CC: Melvin H. Chalfen, M.D., Commissioner
Judith A. McTiernan, R.N., Associate Administrator for Patient Care
Services



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

June 5, 1989

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report No. 16 regarding the recruitment of nurses from other countries, I submit the attached report from the Administrator of the Cambridge Hospital.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Agenda Item No. 3 ⁸424

Re: response to Awaiting Report Item 16 on the
recruitment of nurses from other countries.

In City Council,

June 5, 1989

6-5-89

Placed on file.