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(PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.)

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Press Release

MANY FILIPINO NURSES NOW UNDEREMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED

Many licensed nurses are now underemployed or unemployed as a result of changes of policy in destination countries, the current situation of oversupply, and quality problems among others. This started in 2006 when demand for Philippine nurses plateaued due to US visa retrogression and UK policy change that signaled the shift to home grown health workers instead of recruiting them from overseas.

In the domestic market, the nursing licensure exams produced 37,030 nurses in 2006 and 31,275 nurses in 2007 that represents less than 50% of those who took the Nurse Licensure Exams (NLE). In these two years alone with the domestic demand not increasing and the global demand decreasing, many nurses are now waiting to be employed, underemployed and unemployed. In the US alone the quota for visas has been filled up resulting in delayed processing of visas with current efforts focused on 2006 accepted applicants. The domestic market is now oversaturated with nursing pools in major hospitals as high as 1500 and with employment waiting times ranging from six to 12 months. Nursing pools refer to those deemed qualified by hospital employers but waiting to be formally employed. The current nursing employment market is a buyers market that allows current employers to be highly selective and where the quality of a vast number of job seekers is very closely scrutinized.

Quality in nursing education is a critical issue thus the CMO 5 is an important initiative of the CHED in ensuring safe ethical and quality nursing practice. The government through CHED has already spent Php 2million in its efforts in developing and **conducting public hearings** in consultation for curricular revisions with stakeholders.

The nursing sector defends the new nursing curriculum prescribed by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order # 5 this year. While attacked by some private education stakeholders, 341 nursing schools have already implemented the new curriculum, and nursing leaders and educators firmly believe that this curricular reform will improve the quality of current Philippine nursing education products by honing critical competencies to provide safe and high quality health care for their patients here and abroad. Core competencies for 11 key areas of responsibilities that are important in nursing are spelled out in the various nursing professional courses together with their indicators. Full implementation of the CMO is not until 3 years from promulgation. Schools not yet ready to implement the new curriculum this year has also been given 1 year to implement

this enriched 4 year curriculum based on CHED Memorandum dated May 23, 2008. The Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing, Philippine Nursing Education Academy (ADPCN-PNEA), the education arm of the association can assist the schools, deans, and faculty members with its training programs for implementation of the curriculum.

The Philippine nursing education has to continue to maintain a comfortable strategic global competitive edge leading health care professionals as effective change agents in making national and global health care potent in the fulfillment of global millennium development goals (MDGs) with meaningful reforms in place.

The nursing sector also reiterates that there is no need to establish new or legitimize existing Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programs. Instead of coming out with a new category of nurses that is illegal by the Philippine Nursing Law, the country should focus more on looking for ways to harness the potentials of newly graduated nurses who are still unemployed and underemployed.

The PNA through its president Dr. Leah Paquiz received statements from newly graduated LPNs about their sorry plight. At least two of the LPN program graduates wrote that "Being a licensed practical nurse is definitely NOT A WAY to enter the US as what is being claimed by Practical Nursing schools in our country. Like us and a relatively increasing number of fellow Philippine-educated LPNs, we cannot be issued working visas or immigrant visas by the US." They claimed that they were misled by their respective schools as they need to spend almost \$5000 or almost Php 200,000 more to complete courses needed to complete Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for international applicants. Sadly, they were also informed that there is enough supply of LPNs in the US and what they really need are Registered Nurses. The hapless Filipinos then said that it was painful to learn that the time they spent in studying practical nursing was "wasted- the money they borrowed was consumed and rendered useless". Let this be a warning to all who fall prey to false advertisements on the high demand for Practical Nurses Abroad.

The nursing leaders and educators decry the commercialization of nursing to lure the unknowing public into enrolling in LPN training programs and poor quality nursing education programs. Ensuring quality and safety of nursing practice through various nursing education and practice reforms will counteract the blatant commercialization. The nursing sector enjoins the country's leaders and the public to be better informed before making any rash decisions in promoting or legitimizing LPN programs.



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