

For Official Release  
PR 004-12272022  
Office of the Governor  
Utulei, American Samoa  
December 27, 2022



## Lieutenant Governor Talauega and Compliance Review Committee Meets with LBJ Executives

*"There is a ripple effect of this walkout and it is affecting the nurses and their families, and the medical care of our people. The bottom line is, we need to take care of our employees and our people."*

On Wednesday, December 21, 2022 at 1:00pm, Lieutenant Governor Talauega V. Ale and the Compliance Review Committee (CRC) met with Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center (LBJ) Board Chairman Dr. Malouamaui Tuiolosega, Board Member Afamasaga Dr. Talifa Talifa, Chief Executive Officer Moefaaui William Emmsley, Chief Finance Officer Fala S. Lesa.

CRC members included Chair Chief of Staff Loa T. Laupola, Attorney General Fainuulelei Falefatu Alailima-Utu, OFI Director Blanche Lulu Barber, Director Lynn Alaimalo, Deputy Director Levi Reese. Others that were present were Department of Health Director Motusa T. Nua, Equal Employment Officer Eseta Iosefa, Special Programs Manager Silia Time, and Senior Executive Assistant to the Governor Aoelua Solomona.

The executives from LBJ brought forth two major issues they are facing: Licensing of newly recruited Nurses from Fiji and the Nurses' Walkout. Presenting on behalf of LBJ was Chairman Dr. Malouamaui Tuiolosega.

Dr. Malouamaui reported the following:

The hospital's ratio of nurses to patients is currently estimated at about 1 nurse to 12 patients (1:12), this is a violation of regulations in regards to safe staffing ratios which is currently 1:4. There was a temporary relief to staffing during the COVID-19 community outbreak earlier this year, but after the FEMA and medical teams departed, LBJ continued to operate with a total of 45 RNs.

To address the shortage, LBJ began to recruit nurses from island nations in the Pacific. They recruited 21 nurses from the island of Fiji, all who are licensed RNs and have field experience. The issue they face is that these nurses are working as nursing assistants

(CNAs) until they take the exam to practice medicine in a US territory. According to Dr. Tuiolosega, they would have to attend ASCC for six months prior to taking this exam.

The second matter is the Nurses' Walkout. CEO Moefaaau reported that they have met with the lead Nurses of the walkout and have listened to their grievances. To name a few: Nurses are overworked and under-resourced, leadership issues, and pay adjustments.

Lieutenant Governor Talauega and members of the CRC discussed each matter thoroughly with LBJ executives to help find solutions.

Director Motusa, also the Chairman of the Health Services Regulatory Board (HSRB), pointed out that there is a disconnect between LBJ and DOH along with the HSRB. He has offered to aid LBJ with DOH nurses, and the HSRB will await the packages of the 21 recruited RNs from LBJ-DHR for the board to review.

"On behalf of Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga, I offer our support where it is necessary, to make sure we address these concerns as soon as possible. We need to think outside of the box, and change our approach on how we take care of our nurses. There is a ripple effect of this walkout and it is affecting the nurses and their families, the hospital, and the medical care of our people. The bottom line is, we need to take care of our employees and our people," stated Lt. Governor Talauega.

A follow up meeting has been called for December 28, 2022.

###