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October 27, 2011

TO: Governor Chris Gregoire
Marty Brown, Director OFM

FROM: Health Care Coalition Unions

SUBJECT: Request to Re-Open 2011-2013 Health Care Benefits Agreement

We are in receipt of your October 26th memo requesting to re-open the 2011-2013 Health Care Benefits Agreement. We are well aware of the unrelenting pressure that the Great Recession has had on revenues and increased caseloads. Our members are living this workload pressure every day. As you are well aware, our members have already agreed to a 3% pay decrease, a 3% increase in employee health care premium share, and increases in the health care co-pays during the 2011-2013 biennium. Over and above the mentioned employee concessions, state workers have endured significant furloughs and oppressively high workloads.

It is clear that state employee salary and benefits did not cause the recession and it is equally clear that continued erosion of these wages and benefits will not assist in revenue recovery. The State's economy is further harmed when its own employees' salaries and benefits are reduced to such a level that they have little disposable income to spend in the local economy.

As the Governor, herself has stated "I don't know how we expect them to work their hearts out if I break their back...There comes a point when they are so demoralized that they can't do the job." We believe our members are well past that point. They have given and given. Enough is Enough. It is time for other organizations who benefit from the state budget to embrace a fair share of concessions as well. All organizations should share equally in this sacrifice.

We, therefore, respectfully decline your offer to re-open our 2011-2013 Health Care Agreement.

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