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SEIU Local 1991 Requests Grand Jury Investigation of Jackson Health System

Miami — SEIU Local 1991 (www.seiu1991.org), the union representing 5,000 nurses, doctors and healthcare professionals at Jackson Health System, today requested a state grand jury investigation into gross mismanagement that has caused the public hospital to teeter on financial ruin and that is putting patients at risk.

“It’s time we know the truth about what’s going on with Jackson’s finances,” said Martha Baker, RN, president of SEIU Local 1991. “We owe it to the patients we serve and to the taxpayers who are funding Jackson.”

Baker formally requested the grand jury investigation in a letter delivered today to Katherine Fernandez-Rundle, the Miami-Dade State Attorney.

Florida law empowers state attorneys to initiate grand jury investigations of public agencies and the public officials who run them. Grand juries can then report findings and recommendations concerning mismanagement, misconduct, or misuse of public funds.

Baker noted that Jackson executives recently surprised its own governing board by announcing that losses last year were \$203 million instead of the \$45 million that they initially reported. What’s more, Jackson executives predicted that losses for the current fiscal year, which ends this September, mushroomed to \$229 million from previous estimates of \$87 million.

“The only way for us to really find out the true extent of Jackson’s mismanagement and current financial problems is for the state attorney’s office to follow the money and find out who knew what, and when,” Baker said.

Baker also noted that patients are becoming more at risk at Jackson because of indiscriminate budget cuts that have compromised care.

“We’re talking about patients — our children, our spouses, our parents — who aren’t getting the level of care they deserve because of gross mismanagement,” said Baker, a registered nurse for 30 years who most recently was a nurse manager at Jackson’s trauma intensive care unit.

Among other functions, Jackson serves as the primary trauma center for Miami-Dade County. Baker noted that all trauma patients in Miami-Dade are sent to Jackson, so quality of care directly affects the entire community and not just indigent patients.

“If you need trauma care, you will be taken to Jackson. We have a responsibility to provide this vital lifeline to everyone who needs it,” she said.

Baker noted that SEIU 1991 has repeatedly advocated reforms to provide more independent oversight and transparency at Jackson. SEIU 1991 also has proposed several reforms to save Jackson, and taxpayers, tens of millions of dollars, while providing patients the highest level of medical care.

Baker said that SEIU 1991 will assist the state attorney’s office in conducting its investigation.

“It’s a shame that it took this crisis to finally draw attention to Jackson’s mismanagement,” she said. “We should not squander this opportunity to uncover what went wrong, fix the problems, and reform Jackson to make it the crown jewel of public hospitals nationwide,”

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SEIU Healthcare Florida Local 1991, the voice of 5,000 nurses, doctors and healthcare professionals united for high-quality care at Jackson Health System.