

To the Healthcare spokespersons of the House of Representatives and participants in the National Healthcare Debate

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Your reference

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### **appeal for additional investment in healthcare professionals**

Dear Members of Parliament,

The corona crisis has been going on for almost one year and still demands the utmost effort daily from healthcare professionals. At the same time, the healthcare professionals have less and less understanding of the tough realities of limited finances available for healthcare. This is the context for the university medical centres, where alongside the provision of high-quality care, high-quality research is done into the healthcare of tomorrow. We also focus on education and training future healthcare professionals.

We have watched as the Cabinet found funding for numerous sectors and professions, such as education, construction and entrepreneurs. The Netherlands has shown time and again that the people working in healthcare deserve more appreciation ('balcony applause'). The current Cabinet has decided to postpone the implementation of motions already passed by the House of Representatives concerning better working conditions for healthcare personnel until the next Cabinet is formed. This leaves us stranded, as major healthcare employers, between the expectations of our personnel and the practical possibilities.

Luckily, we are still 100% ready to receive COVID patients. That is expected of the UMCs, with their 'last resort' function. But it demands an awful lot from our staff. These people are our employees who see that in this period we have not been given any leeway in the current cao negotiations for significant improvements to wages and other labour conditions. They cannot understand this. As UMCs we held dialogues earlier with a cross-section of our personnel working in healthcare, education and research. Partly as a result, we developed five leading principles for labour conditions development:

- Attractive and unique, with an emphasis on development, continued progress, and both vertical and horizontal career possibilities.
- Fair and equitable compensation that is commensurate with the appreciation and recognition our personnel deserve.
- Vitality and employment opportunity, including a good work-private life balance and addressing work pressure.
- Versatility and flexibility.
- Fair relationship to pension contributions.

We want to highlight two aspects of labour conditions development:

- Investing in retaining and attracting additional healthcare personnel is a necessary condition to meet the growing demand for care. This includes, particularly for nurses and medical support functions, a structural recognition and appreciation, such as a good career perspective and suitable compensation commensurate with their commitment and professionalism.
- Because the UMCs are obliged to have ABP pension insurance, the employer's contribution for the pension premiums is considerably higher than in the rest of the healthcare sector. In addition, the large difference in pension schemes hinders the mobility and collaboration in the sector. We want to arrive at a structural solution for an even playing field with the general hospitals in terms



of pensions. Until this is possible, we would like to receive compensation for the excessive employer's contributions.

In the current cao negotiations, we are taking steps based on these five principles to be and remain sufficiently attractive as a major healthcare employer for our employees. In reality, there is a negative wage leeway due to ongoing costs from the previous cao and increases in the pension premiums and social insurances. It is also harsh reality that no money is becoming available in healthcare. We also have to deal with a restrictive global agreement, which specifies that the volume in curative care may not grow despite the increasing demand for care, technological developments and higher prices for expensive medicines.

We are appealing to you urgently to invest more in curative care and in the healthcare professionals as soon as possible. The applause has to be transformed into wage leeway, if necessary through one-off measures or adjustments of the incidental post in the compensation for labour costs. We shall of course use all the money earmarked for wages by the Cabinet to improve the labour conditions of our employees.

We shall keep insisting on more money for healthcare, for our people and our patients. We call on all parties to include more money for healthcare in their coalition agreement after the elections. We are always happy to explain the situation in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Kruijthof (Board of Directors, Amsterdam UMC) and Gabriël Zwart (Board of Directors, Maastricht UMC +); managers NFU Labour Conditions