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Nurses at Suburban Community Hospital Rallied Outside the Hospital Today to Protest Severe Staffing Shortages, Pay Inequalities, and Unpaid Healthcare Benefits

Norristown, PA – More than two years into a deadly pandemic with COVID infections once again surging, RNs at Suburban Community Hospital in Norristown are still severely understaffed and struggling not only with the virus but with pay inequities and unpaid healthcare benefits. They protested outside the hospital today to call attention to these issues in an effort to protect their patients and themselves.

Despite a hospital-wide staffing shortage, and the ICU and the Emergency Department at crisis levels, Suburban's corporate, California-based owner, Prime Healthcare, hasn't worked with its nursing staff to improve retention. Instead, it has inexplicably discontinued incentives for its nurses to pick up extra shifts and is refusing to pay out thousands of dollars worth of qualified staff medical benefits; some of the bills have gone to collection companies.

"Nurses don't become nurses because we think we're going to make a lot of money," says ICU nurse Shannan Giambrone, R.N., co-president of Suburban General Nurses' Association. "But like everyone else in this country, we expect to be paid fairly and to be given benefits by our employers. We are losing nurses at Suburban because Prime is not doing that, and that is a quality of care issue. Our employer may be Prime, but we work in the service of our community. They are why we will be outside on Wednesday."

"Prime Healthcare's stated mission is to deliver compassionate, quality care to patients and better health care to communities," says Emergency Department nurse Terena Stinson, R.N., co-president of Suburban General Nurses' Association. "We, their nurses, are part of the community – *their* community! Yet they force us into using their own very complicated health insurance plan and then refuse to pay our medical bills. They bring in agency and temporary staff but they don't recognize and reward their loyal nurses. They want so much from us, but they give us the bare minimum. We are fed up, and we are exhausted."

The nurses and technical professionals at Prime-owned St. Michael's Medical Center in nearby Newark, New Jersey, are currently striking over the same trio of issues – wages, healthcare benefits and chronic staffing shortages at the hospital.

"During the last two years, the outpouring of kindness we've received from the community has been truly humbling and stands in stark contrast to Prime's complete lack of appreciation for the value we bring to the hospital," says Emergency Department nurse Andrea Small, R.N. "Nurses are the face of patient care and the backbone of our healthcare system -- can you value excellence in health care without valuing your nurses? I don't think you can."

The Suburban General Nurses' Association is an affiliate of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth and was founded on the belief that patients receive the best care when clinical-care staff have a strong voice to advocate for both patients and themselves.