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Nurses at Jefferson Frankford Hospital Held A Press Conference Outside the Hospital to Announce They Are Forming a Union to Address Critical Staffing Concerns Inside the Hospital and to Fight for Excellence in Patient Care

Overworked and under-respected, the nurses at Jefferson Frankford Hospital stood together this morning to advocate for their patients, their profession and each other as staffing in the hospital remains dangerously low and management has mounted an aggressive anti-union campaign instead of addressing the nurses' concerns.

PHILADELPHIA, PA: The nurses at Jefferson Frankford Hospital are forming a union to address the chronic and dangerous nurse understaffing in the hospital. They want management to take steps to hire and retain more nurses and respect their federally granted right to organize. Instead, the hospital has mounted an aggressive anti-union campaign, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars *not* on patient care or to fix the problems within the hospital, but to hire union busters, who have engaged in a pattern of illegal behavior.

Jefferson hired notorious union-busting firm Healthcare Labor Solutions, the same consultants hired by Jersey Shore Medical Center in New Jersey when the nurses there tried to organize last year. The nurses at Jersey Shore filed 12 Unfair Labor Practice charges against Healthcare Labor Solutions and the hospital for the same type of illegal actions they are engaging in now at Jefferson-Frankford. The Jefferson Frankford nurses have also filed numerous ULP charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

Today, outside the hospital, the nurses stood up for their patients and for each other. With them on the sidewalk and in their fight were city, state and federal-level government officials or their representatives, including US Congressman Brendan Boyle; state Sens. Nikil Saval, Sharif Street, and Tina Tartaglione; state Representatives Jason Dawkins, Joe Hohenstein, and Danilo Burgos; and Philadelphia City Councilmembers Helen Gym, María Quiñones-Sánchez, Kendra Brooks and Isaiah Thomas. The officials pledged their support for the nurses and urged Jefferson to respect their right to organize, demanding that a quality healthcare system value the people who drive it.

“Not only is union busting a disgrace,” said Philadelphia City Councilmember Helen Gym. “It’s illegal, it’s unconstitutional, and we will fight it with every ounce that we have. We will be there with you every step of the way.”

State Sen. Sharif Street added: "Just like we look to these folks, the nurses, to make sure our loved ones are cared for, we're looking to you, Jefferson, to make sure *they're* cared for. We demand nothing less."

"Last year was the Year of the Nurse. We stood between our community and a deadly pandemic. Our hospital publicly called us heroes. And yet, we got no raises, no contributions to our retirement plans and little help--few additional nurses or aides. Meanwhile, Jefferson made \$400 million in profits," says Jefferson Frankford Hospital nurse Kevin Diamond, RN. "This right here is us advocating strongly for our patients and for each other."

In early 2021, nurses at Jefferson Frankford Hospital began meeting with one another to discuss the state of their hospital and issues that were standing in the way of providing safe, excellent patient care. Nurses reported critical issues with staff turnover and departures, leaving many units across the hospital understaffed and with heavy patient loads, forcing the nurses who remained to attempt to do more with less and putting patients at risk (studies have repeatedly shown that safely staffed hospitals have lower mortality rates).

This was after a devastating year, where nurses and other frontline healthcare professionals worked tirelessly and selflessly sacrificed during the COVID-19 pandemic at great personal risk to themselves. Jefferson Health responded to their nurses' heroism by announcing that the hospital was cancelling their scheduled 401k contributions. This news came after Jefferson pulled in \$394,943,000 in profits during the pandemic.

"It's about fairness," says ICU nurse Lola Morgan, BSN, RN, CCRN, CHPN. "Last year, a coworker said, 'The bigger Jefferson becomes, the smaller we become.' That comment has been on my mind this entire journey. It's time to make our voices heard!"

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth.