

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 23, 2022

CONTACT: Megan Othersen Gorman / mgorman@pasnap.com / (215) 817-5781

Frontline Healthcare Professionals at Temple University Hospital Picketed Outside the Hospital to Call Attention to Serious and Persistent Quality-of-Care Issues Inside the Hospital That Hurt Both Patients and Caregivers

Plymouth Meeting, PA – 2,250 registered nurses and allied professionals at Temple University Hospital held an informational picket today to highlight serious quality-of-care issues inside the hospital, including chronic unsafe staffing, an alarming escalation in incidents of workplace violence, and a lack of resources and respect for caregivers, all of which combine to create unsafe patient-care conditions and an environment that inhibits recruitment and retention of staff.

“The turnover rate for nurses here is staggering,” said ICU nurse Mary Adamson, RN, president of the Temple University Hospital Nurses Association (TUHNA). “We have more than 170 agency nurses in the hospital, and we are still short-staffed every day and every night. Everyone from physicians to orderlies complains that we are strained beyond our limits and patient care is suffering. But our CEO sends out multiple press releases bragging about the hospital’s millions of dollars in profits.”

“Temple Hospital made millions off the efforts of the front line during the pandemic, yet they have invested very little in the caregivers who carried their facility and their patient community through it,” said certified pharmacy technician Carlos Aviles, CphT, president of Temple Allied Professionals (TAP). “Temple administrators have opened up their wallets – but not for the caregivers who made them millions or for the people of North Philadelphia they serve. They’ve bought new hospitals instead.

“Just to be clear: Our contract fight is about more than just money,” he said. “We need retention and respect. Without our dedicated staff, patient care is in jeopardy.”

TUHNA and TAP are currently negotiating new contracts. At the center of their negotiations is Temple University Hospital administration’s failure to use the significant monetary resources at their disposal to invest in quality of care issues like safe staffing and retention of veteran caregivers. Over the last three years, the hospital’s workforce (a measure of full-time employees per patient) has declined by 15 percent.

“In March of 2020, I brought the first COVID ICU patient to the Boyer Pavilion,” said Tim DeMuro, a longtime Medical Respiratory ICU nurse. “I worked tirelessly there for over a year. Despite insufficient staffing, supply shortages, and mental, emotional and physical strain, the nurses, techs, and bedside staff rose to the occasion to put our patients first, and as a direct result of our efforts, Temple was recognized for excellence and innovation in COVID treatments. Despite that, our administration has shown us nothing but disrespect, always asking us to do more with less – less staff, fewer supplies, and less support from management. We’ve had enough. Now is the time for TUHS to rise to the occasion – to put their patients over their profits and give us the reasonable, respectable contract we deserve so we can safely provide quality care to this community.”

“During COVID, my department lost a dear friend and colleague, Lilo Hames,” said telemetry technician Jamelia Norton. “She passed away from COVID, and we believe that if Temple had better COVID policies, and had done more to keep us safe, my friend Lilo might still be here with us. I don’t blame the pandemic on Temple. But Temple did not do enough to keep us safe during COVID. Now we’re fighting for a contract that shows respect for us as the frontline workers, in the name of our colleagues that we lost during the COVID crisis. It’s going to be us that fight for the respect that we deserve. It’s going to be us that fight to keep our colleagues and our patients safe at work.”

“Temple needs to focus on keeping the dedicated staff who gave everything we had to our patients during the worst days of the pandemic,” said respiratory therapist Journe Gries. “Management has no idea what the halls of the COVID hospital looked like. I work in a department that Temple did not fight for or protect during COVID. Managers sat in their offices. They didn’t get us the PPE, the equipment, the safety that we needed. I am fighting for a contract that will protect us because I never want to feel that afraid again. We are due for a change.”

“The nursing staff has taken every challenge thrown our way, often at our own expense,” said longtime Emergency Department nurse Maryanne Holsworth. “And many of us are now suffering from the moral injury that results when our hands are tied in providing the very best care, because we don’t have the time, the staff or the resources. We deserve more, and our patients deserve more.”

An informational picket is an event that helps raise community awareness; the nurses and allied professionals attending the informational picket are either off from work that day or on a break. Standing in solidarity with the caregivers on the picket line were numerous state Representatives, state Senators, and Philadelphia City Councilmembers as well as Lieutenant Governor and candidate for U.S. Senate John Fetterman and state Representative and candidate for Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis.

“All of this would be unnecessary,” added Adamson, “if Temple Hospital administration came to the table willing to retain caregivers and staff the hospital properly so that we can give the care our patients deserve.”

The Temple University Hospital Nurses Association and Temple Allied Professionals are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 9,000 frontline nurses and healthcare professionals across Pennsylvania.

Issues Summary ATTACHED