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“The Hospital Must Do More.” Nurses from Crozer Chester Medical Center Hold an Informational Picket to Call Attention to the Staffing Crisis Inside Their Hospital.

*Nurses from Crozer Chester Medical Center, a PASNAP local in Delaware County, stood together today to alert the community to the unsafe conditions within the hospital and to implore owner Prospect Medical Holdings to prioritize patient safety and take immediate action to fully staff the hospital. **The CCMC nurses want management to follow the agreed upon safe staffing guidelines in their contract, guaranteeing a minimum level of nursing care for each patient and prioritizing patient safety.***

Instead of fixing the patient safety issues raised by the nurses, Prospect Medical Holdings, the for-profit owner of Crozer-Chester Medical Center, is perpetuating an atmosphere of punitive and retaliatory behavior toward its nurses while allowing staffing levels in its Delaware County facility to drop to unsafe and unprecedented levels, endangering both patients and nurses. When nurses have too many patients, patients don't get the focused, attentive care they need and deserve.

“We have a law in Pennsylvania that limits the number of children who can be assigned to a childcare worker in daycare centers--why don't sick children have the same protection?” asks PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N. “We desperately need safe minimum staffing levels in our hospitals. When nurses are routinely required to care for more patients than is safe, it's called chronic nurse short-staffing, and it is a crisis for both patients and nurses.”

“I've been a nurse for 28 years and an Emergency Department nurse for 24. I've never been pulled so thin and forced to cut so many corners with patient care,” says CCMC ED nurse Don Webb, R.N.. “We used to have four-patient assignments. Now we're routinely assigned five or six or even seven patients, many of them acutely ill.”

Webb says the CCMC ER wait times can be 14 to 16 hours. “Our patients aren't line items,” he adds. “They're vulnerable human beings. We can't just slow the assembly line down. They need and deserve our focused attention, and right now, with the staffing the way it is, with how exhausted we are, they don't have it.”

“Sometimes, we're so short-staffed, I'm the trauma nurse, the charge nurse, the triage nurse and the secretary, too,” says Angel Estep, R.N., who has been an Emergency Department nurse for 17 years. “Honestly, I think about quitting every shift. I haven't because I love what I do and the community I serve. But I'm not doing them any justice when my attention is so fractured.”

According to a landmark study comparing patient outcomes in California, where nurse-to-patient ratios are mandated, and patient outcomes in Pennsylvania, where they are not (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/195438>), the odds of patient mortality increases by 7 percent for every additional patient in the average nurse's workload.

"All we want is to be able to give focused, safe, quality care in an environment where we're respected, supported and given the resources we need to prioritize patient care," says Peggy Malone, RN, Vice President of the Crozer Chester Nurses Association. "The hospital must do more for its nurses and its patients."

Many state- and county-wide elected officials stood alongside the nurses today and vowed to fight for them and for the hospital's patient community. When asked about the Patient Safety Act, a PASNAP-supported bill in the state House and Senate that would mandate safe nurse-to-patient ratios in all hospitals in Pennsylvania, state Rep. Jennifer O'Mara responded bluntly, "Management doesn't need a bill to do the right thing. They can set these ratios for their own hospitals. They don't need to wait for the state to act."

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