**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, November 17, 2020**

**CONTACT: Megan Othersen Gorman/meganog@msn.com/215-817-5781**

**Nurses at St. Mary Medical Center Strike To Protect Their Patients**

*On the cusp of a second deadly surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses at St. Mary Medical Center have been sounding alarm bells regarding persistent and dangerous staffing issues at the hospital, but their warnings have fallen on deaf ears. Nearly 800 nurses walked out this morning to grab Trinity’s attention.*

**Langhorne, PA --** As coronavirus cases surge once again in the commonwealth and nationwide, the nurses at St. Mary Medical Center in Bucks County have been pressing owner Trinity Health Systems to agree to safe minimal staffing levels to ensure that the hospital is safely staffed, for both patient and nurse safety. But Trinity and its corporate leadership have refused to do so. The nurses feel they have no other means of making Trinity listen than to strike  --  for themselves, for their patients, and for what is coming over the next several months.

**The hospital is filling up with COVID patients, and patients are waiting for hours in the Emergency room because there’s not enough staff to take care of them up on the floors. The ER has been on divert for most of the last week. On some units, schedules are being posted with half the nurses needed for some shifts. The nurses, who risked their lives and the lives of those they love during the first COVID surge, need help.**

In the last two years, 243 nurses have left St. Mary--a 30 percent turnover rate. They’re leaving because they are burned out from short staffing, underappreciated and undervalued. They’re going to other hospitals in the region where they are making $6 to $7 more per hour.

“Safe staffing is the main issue in our negotiation--it's why we organized last year in the first place,” says Kathy McKamey R.N., who works on St Mary's MG2 unit and has been at the hospital for 10 years. “Trinity has refused to commit to the minimal safe staffing guidelines every study out there has said improve patient outcomes. But the truth is, even if they had, we don't have the staff to fill them because our wage scale is so far below that of area hospitals. Nurses are literally fleeing to other hospitals 20 minutes away where they can make $6 to $7 more an hour. My unit alone has lost 20 nurses since January; the perioperative areas have lost 35 nurses in the last year. The grids are meaningless if you can't find nurses to fill the spots."

“To Trinity, this is all about numbers,” says Engle. “But those numbers are patients—they’re someone’s mother, sister, brother or father. They’re in a bed, experiencing one of the worst moments of their lives. And we, the nurses, have to make decisions—like leaving the room quickly to attend to someone else—we wouldn’t normally have to make because we’re so short-staffed and caring for too many patients. And we carry the weight of those decisions on our shoulders every single day. It’s terrible.”

What the nurses want is simple: They want Trinity to hire more nurses and to do more to retain them so they can provide the St. Mary community with excellent care.

“Trinity is forcing the compassion out of nursing care by running us so lean,” says Sue Lyons, R.N., who works in the Ambulatory Surgical Unit. “When we’re short-staffed, as we always are now, you don’t have the time to truly attend to the patient at the bedside, which is the core of nursing care. It’s the caring in the care. That’s why we’re fighting—to be able to care for our patients. That’s why we became nurses in the first place.”

**The nurses at St. Mary Medical Center walked off the job this morning and are striking today and tomorrow, Wednesday, November 18, to highlight the shortage of nursing staff. Face coverings/masks are required, and every effort will be made to maintain safe social distancing.**

“Nobody walked away from what we needed to do [during the first COVID surge], and we won’t walk away now,” said Maureen May, RN, president of PASNAP. “But we will send a message, via a strike, that you have to do the right thing. This is our message — to the hospitals, to the public — that we’ve had enough.”

“We aren’t abandoning our community during a pandemic,” says Lynn McCarthy, R.N. “We are walking out to *protect* them.”

Headquartered in Livonia, Michigan, Trinity is one of the country’s largest nationwide healthcare organizations, encompassing more than 90 hospitals and behavioral health facilities and had $8.8 billion in cash and investments on hand as of March 30th of this year. St. Mary is one of Trinity’s most profitable hospitals. The nurses at St. Mary have been bargaining for a first contract for more than a year.

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals represents 8,500 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth.