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

Frontline Healthcare Professionals at Temple University Hospital Came Together Today Ahead of Contract Negotiations to Demonstrate Their Unity Behind a Shared Mission: Providing Highest-Quality Health Care to Their North Philadelphia Community

Philadelphia, PA – The COVID-19 pandemic hit the residents of North Philadelphia – Temple University Hospital’s Main Campus patient community – especially hard and severely stretched the nurses and technical professionals who care for them. Many of those staff members have left. Those who remain came together for a “Unity Day” rally today to emphasize the importance of staff retention to quality patient care.

“When a nurse leaves, you’re not just losing a body. You’re losing continuity of care, education, experience, familiarity with the hospital, and connection with the care team,” said ICU nurse Mary Adamson, RN, president of the Temple University Hospital Nurses Association (TUHNA). “You know who suffers those losses? The patient. And our community.”

Chronic understaffing is a problem that feeds on itself. When hospitals aren’t staffed safely and healthcare workers struggle daily with heavy, unsafe assignments, they leave the bedside, and the understaffing – along with the care a hospital offers – becomes worse.

“Staff retention should be Temple’s number one priority,” said pharmacy technician Carlos Aviles, CphT, president of Temple Allied Professionals (TAP). “Unfortunately, the administration is already showing us that they may not be willing to do what it takes to keep qualified staff in the building. A great example is the recent retention bonus program: They are trying to cut almost 10% of TAP members out of receiving retention payments. Other hospitals in the city paid a little bit out of their own pockets to make sure everyone’s contributions during COVID were recognized. Temple needs to step it up and make retention of qualified staff a priority in every single area of our hospital.”

Staff retention will be at the core of TUHNA and TAP’s negotiations for a new contract. Their current contracts expire on September 30. Negotiations for the 1,350 TUHNA members and 900 TAP members begin in August.

“Coffee mugs and banners expressing appreciation are lovely, but we need real change throughout our healthcare and hospital system,” says Adamson. “We need enforceable safe staffing standards. We need real protection from workplace violence. We need a standard-setting retention package. We need to prioritize getting experienced staff to stay.”

“For years and even during the pandemic, the hospital industry has been maximizing profits at the expense of nurses and healthcare workers, and Temple University Health System has shared in these profits,” said PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N., a longtime Temple University Hospital nurse. “Unity Day at Temple should be referred to as retention day. As the Temple nurses, professionals and technical

workers embark upon contract negotiations, we call upon our hospital administrators to bargain in good faith to retain the qualified nurses and healthcare workers who have served this community for decades. Investing profits into safe staffing, workplace violence prevention and patient safety are surefire ways of retaining staff and improving the health and safety of our patients. There is no shortage of licensed registered nurses in Pennsylvania, however, there is a shortage of valued bedside caregivers.”

The Temple University Hospital Nurses Association and Temple Allied Professionals are affiliates of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP), 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.