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Nurses and Technical Specialists at Fox Chase Cancer Center Charge Their Employer, Temple Health, With Violating the National Labor Relations Act

Unions File “Unfair Labor Practice” Charges With the National Labor Relations Board

Philadelphia, PA – On March 7, 2024, over 500 Fox Chase Cancer Center caregivers, who have been bargaining for their first Union contracts with employer Temple Health since September, charged Temple with conditioning its economic bargaining on reaching an agreement on non-economic proposals, which is a violation of Section 8(a)(5) of the National Labor Relations Act.

Fox Chase Techs United and Fox Chase Nurses United have been negotiating with Temple for more than five months and have met with the hospital 19 times. Yet Temple has refused to respond in any way to the Unions’ economic proposals. They have neither commented on the caregivers’ economic proposals nor offered counter-economic proposals – but they have proposed concessions.

Temple wants to cut retirement matching, make the caregivers’ existing attendance policy more punitive, and reduce holiday benefits during a post-pandemic time when caregivers are fleeing the bedside and retention of skilled, experienced health professionals is more important than ever.

“We, the staff, were told several times by Fox Chase Cancer Center CEO Dr. Uzzo that Fox Chase would bargain in good faith,” says Fox Chase Cancer Center ICU nurse Ed Hall, BSN, RN, CCRN, “but that hasn’t proven to be the case in numerous ways.”

Fox Chase Techs United are 135 technical specialists at Temple Health’s Fox Chase Cancer Center who voted to unionize to have a voice on the job to advocate for themselves and their patients on June 7, 2023. Fox Chase Nurses United are nearly 400 Fox Chase Cancer Center nurses who voted to unionize for the same reasons on June 20, 2023. Both are locals of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, representing more than 3,600 nurses and allied professionals within the Temple Health System.

After filing for a Union election in May 2023, the Fox Chase RNs endured a heavy-handed anti-union campaign that included suspending five employees and terminating two. PASNAP filed a number of Unfair Labor Practice charges then against the hospital for the unfair suspensions and terminations, as well as for forcing nurses and techs to attend mandatory anti-union meetings, implementing a punitive attendance policy designed to penalize staff who become sick and have to stay home to protect their

vulnerable patient population, and threatening to withhold regularly scheduled merit increases if the nurses voted to form a Union.

“Once we voted to unionize, we repeatedly requested to bargain on our campus so staff could attend the sessions and actively participate,” says Hall. “Not only were we denied, we were unable to ascertain who exactly was denying our request. For our voices to be heard, we should be able to attend and bargain easily. Instead, we are forced to meet off-site and be strung along by management. Most staff cannot attend. As a group of health professionals simply trying to obtain what we need for our patients, we feel Dr Uzzo and management have been ignoring our bargaining needs and have never, from the very start of bargaining, treated us fairly.”

The nurses at Jeanes Hospital, Fox Chase’s sister Temple Health facility in Northeast Philadelphia, are also bargaining for a new contract. On February 29th, after more than 6 months of bargaining, the 375 nurses voted by an overwhelming majority to authorize their bargaining committee to submit a 10-day strike notice, if necessary. In Jeanes bargaining, Temple has repeatedly rejected contract language that would ensure minimum safe staffing levels – a critical quality of care concern for Jeanes’ expansive patient community – and has refused to offer wages and compensation that will attract and retain RNs and confer respect for the highly skilled nurses and the exemplary care they provide.

“PASNAP was founded on the belief that patients receive better care when critical care staff have a voice to advocate for their patients and themselves,” says PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N., a longtime Temple University Hospital Mother and Baby Nurse. “In this post-pandemic time, when caregivers struggle simultaneously with chronic understaffing and heightened patient acuity, frontline medical professionals need and deserve respect. Their voice has never been more important.”

Fox Chase Techs United and Fox Chase Nurses United are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 10,000 frontline nurses and allied professionals across Pennsylvania, including T-NAC, the Temple North Anesthesia Coalition at Fox Chase Cancer Center, and the Fox Chase Cancer Center Degreed Professionals. PASNAP also represents seven additional locals, across three campuses, within the Temple Health System.