



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**A STRIKE DATE IS SET:**

**Nearly 1,000 Geisinger Community Medical Center Caregivers Vote Overwhelmingly to Strike on MAY 9TH If Contract Agreements Are Not Reached**

**98% vote “YES” In Favor of a Strike – “We Refuse to be Yesterday’s Heroes and Today’s Zeros,” says Northeastern Pennsylvania Nurses Association President Jen Huber, RN**

**THE 5-DAY STRIKE WILL OCCUR DURING NURSES WEEK**

**Scranton, PA** – 940 frontline healthcare workers spanning multiple job classifications at Geisinger Community Medical Center voted today to strike on May 9th if contract agreements are not reached. The RNs, LPNs, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, technicians, and degreed professionals including Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Chaplains, among others, comprise three PASNAP-affiliated Locals (details below). Each Local has been bargaining with the hospital for months over critical quality-of-care issues and caregiver retention. Management has steadfastly turned a deaf ear to the caregivers’ deep concerns.

"I've been a nurse for over 40 years, but if Geisinger keeps disrespecting its caregivers, few nurses are going to stay that long," says Cardiac Catheterization Nurse Linda Driesbaugh, RN. "We'll lose the skill and expertise of experienced nurses and, for the same reasons, we won't be able to attract young nurses to this area to provide for our community. What are they thinking?"

**Fed up, the caregivers voted overwhelmingly – 98% voted “YES,” in favor of a May 9th strike – to strike for 5 days, beginning on May 9th, during Nurses Week (May 6 - May 12th). The theme for Nurses Week 2024: “Nurses make the difference.”**

Clearly, someone should tell Geisinger that!

On January 1, 2024, Geisinger—a \$7 billion company—zeroed out the Extended PTO time, which is the employees’ sick time, for every employee without a contract protecting it (two of the three Locals prepared to strike are bargaining for their first contracts). The hospital has also proposed eliminating all sick time for registered nurses and nurse anesthetists. Some longtime employees have hundreds of hours in the bank.

Extended PTO is used when caregivers’ become sick, injured, or go on medical leave, including maternity leave. By eliminating it, Geisinger is forcing frontline caregivers to use vacation time when they’re sick.

**The irony is mind-boggling: GCMC – a *healthcare provider* – actively denies the health needs of the very people they entrust to provide patient care.**

“A healthcare system that strips sick time benefits from employees isn’t primarily concerned about ‘care’ or about ‘health,’” says Perioperative Care Nurse Kali Gargone, Membership Chair of the Northeast Pennsylvania Nurses Association at GCMC and a member of PASNAP’s Executive Board, “because by doing so, it’s putting the community, all of our patients, and our staff at risk.”

“We were once considered family here at CMC,” says Registered Radiologic Technologist Pam Guido, a 22-year veteran of the hospital. “Everyone respected each other. And that’s how we treat our community – like family, with respect. Unfortunately, we don’t receive the same respect from our administration. They have now taken away our sick time, which means we’re unable to care for ourselves and, by extension, our patients.”

Geisinger has also proposed *no limit* on increased health insurance costs, which they uniquely control as owner of their own health insurance plan – a proposal that threatens staff retention, a key quality-of-care concern.

“Nurses worked extremely hard during the pandemic and work even harder now due to the shortage of nurses at the bedside, which is only going to get worse,” says Maggie Gillot-Fountain, RN, a clinical access specialist. “Geisinger needs to step up and compensate the nurses with wages and benefits, so we can keep the nurses who are here and bring in the next generation of nurses to care for our community.”

The caregivers fighting tooth and nail for respect for themselves and for patient care are:

- The Northeast Pennsylvania Nurses Association (NEPANA) are 535 RNs and CRNAs who work at the bedside at Geisinger Community Medical Center in Scranton. They have been unionized for more than 15 years; their contract expired on January 12, 2024.
- The GCMC LPNs, Technicians, and Degreed Professionals are 345 Licensed Practical Nurses, technicians, and degreed professionals (Pharmacists, Respiratory Therapists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Chaplains, among others). They have been bargaining since May 2023 for their first contract.
- The GCMC Advanced practitioners are 56 nurse practitioners and physician assistants. They are bargaining for their first contract.

*The three bargaining units of Geisinger Community Medical Center caregivers are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 11,000 frontline nurses and healthcare professionals across Pennsylvania and was founded on the belief that patients do better when critical care staff have a voice to advocate for their patients and themselves.*