



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 22, 2024

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

Geisinger Community Medical Center, a \$7 Billion Company, Takes Sick Time Away From Employees

Nearly 1,000 Geisinger Community Medical Center Employees Across Multiple Job Classifications Picketed Outside Their Facility Today to Call Out the Hospital's Callous Tactics And To Protect Their Patients and Themselves

"We are the heartbeat of this hospital, tirelessly working to ensure the well-being of others. Now, it's our turn to stand up for ourselves. We will not allow the erosion of our hard-earned benefits."

Scranton, PA – 940 frontline healthcare workers at Geisinger Community Medical Center, all of them in contract negotiations now, picked outside the hospital today, carrying signs meant to convey to their community exactly how Geisinger, a \$7 billion company, is treating the staff they entrust to provide care.

**Geisinger:
\$7 Billion
Company
Takes Away
Employees'
Sick Time**



PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF STAFF NURSES & ALLIED PROFESSIONALS

"We were a community hospital long before Geisinger bought the facility," said Physician Assistant Skyler Wilcha, P.A., a member of the Geisinger Allied Professionals Union, which is bargaining for their first contract now. "And while 'community' is still a part of our name, it doesn't feel as though community is something our administration is prioritizing."

The participating caregivers span multiple job classifications including RNs, LPNs, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, technicians, and degreed professionals such as Pharmacists, Physical Therapists,

Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Chaplains, but they share critical concerns that affect patient care and caregiver retention: Unsafe staffing that endangers patients and staff alike; lack of in-hospital protections and safety; and alarming disrespect for caregivers who risked their lives to care for the Scranton community during the COVID pandemic and continue to serve that community with passion, dedication, and expertise.

Pam Guido is a 22-year veteran of the hospital, a Registered Radiologic Technologist who trained at CMC before Geisinger purchased the hospital in 2012. She lives 4 minutes away from the hospital and is a part of GCMC's staff and patient community.

"We were once considered family here at CMC," she said. "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."

Wilcha, Guido, and their colleagues did not receive a merit increase on January 1st, as is customary at GCMC. The hospital increased the caregivers' healthcare costs. And on January 1, 2024, the hospital zeroed out the Extended PTO time, which is the employees' sick time, for every member of the new bargaining units who don't yet have contracts. The hospital has also proposed to eliminate all sick time for registered nurses and nurse anesthetists as well. Some longtime employees have hundreds of hours in the bank.

"We are the heartbeat of this hospital," said Jen Huber, RN, president of the Northeast Pennsylvania Nurses Association at GCMC. "We work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of others. Now, it's our turn to stand up for ourselves. We will not stand for the erosion of our hard-earned benefits."

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 sick, even as cases of respiratory infection (COVID, RSV, and flu) are spiking in our region and prevalent within the walls of the hospital.

"I graduated fairly recently, in 2022," said Registered Vascular Technologist Emily Stanski, who spoke at the noon rally. "When I was going to school, two of my clinical rotations were done here in this hospital. So for a whole year prior to working here, I was actually here learning. When I was finally hired, one of my coworkers was so excited that she dragged me around everywhere to introduce me to everyone. She would say, 'This is Emily, this is our future. She's the young one. She's going to be around for the next 20 years.' Well, if I'm going to be here for the next couple decades, I need to see some changes. That's why I'm outside today"

"This picket is about injustice – the injustice of a \$7 billion company taking from its caregivers and, by extension, its patient community," said Huber. "We want the community to know how unjustly the people who are dedicated to their care and well-being are being treated."

An informational picket is an event that helps raise community awareness; the caregivers attending the informational picket are either off from work that day or on a break.

Summary of issues attached.

The five bargaining units of Geisinger Community Medical Center caregivers are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents 10,000 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.