Columbia Memorial Info Picket is On

On Tuesday, August 20, all nurses are asked to report to your picket shifts.

After nearly 12 hours of negotiations on Aug. 14 with a federal mediator, your ONA bargaining team reports that management refused to address the last major problems that face our hospital in these negotiations. These issues compromise our ability to recruit and retain nurses, and they impact patient safety, so we were unable to reach an agreement.

We were very proud of our members and nurse leaders who stood strong on issues that impact nurses across all units. Management presented us with hard decisions to pick between helping one set of nurses over others, when we know management has the ability to reach an agreement that is fair for all nurses.

At the end of the day, we faced whether or not we would protect nurses in Surgical Services who have seen their dock time double and their scheduled hours plummet. We were told to pick either to improve the dock situation or scheduled hours, but not both, even though management is sitting on a nearly 12 percent operating margin and can provide both. This was unacceptable as we continue every single day to see both nurses' schedules and dock hours be compromised by management. If a dock cap is put in place with no protection on scheduled hours, we may even see scheduled hours reduced further as management avoids nurses hitting the dock cap. A solution that makes things worse is not a solution. When we reflect on the contract as a whole, the risk for spikes in dock time and dramatic drops in scheduled hours exists for nurses in every single unit, when shift length or possible other changes can be made by management to any unit.

Additionally, we are faced with the unfair situation that management has delayed reaching an agreement since negotiations began in April, and our contract expired in May. Currently, they have refused to provide raises that were due on July 1, stating they will not provide retro pay. From the beginning, they were budgeting to provide these wage increases for July 1, but now are demanding to keep that money with no retroactive pay.

One further hurdle we faced due to management's delays in reaching a fair agreement was schedules that needed to come out right away in FBC and Surgical Services required a legal letter signed allowing changes made to properly schedule people during a staffing crisis in FBC, and the continued block problems in Surgical Services. We were able to sign a fair letter for FBC, though they will continue to struggle with a staffing crisis until the hospital can properly recruit and retain nurses. For surgical services, management refused to agree to even a temporary 60-day dock cap, which was especially damaging after all that the nurses in that department have been through.

Under our clear objections to the lack of a Dock Cap, we were forced to sign an temporary letter that allows a slightly improved schedule to be put out. We let them know we intend to picket over the lack of Dock Cap that they could have chosen to provide for these 60 days. Other protections are in place now that the letter has been signed. It will be distributed to all Surgical Services nurses. These protections were agreed to by nurse representatives from SDS, PACU, and Surgery at previous
meetings. Additionally, we have follow-up meetings being scheduled for all nurses in those units to
discuss our next steps.

For our staffing proposal, it was quite difficult to hear management say they did not want protections
in our contract around safe staffing despite it already being the law to provide them. This would not
be a huge thing for management to give us, if they were planning to follow the law. At the moment
the staffing law is enforced by the Oregon Health Authority, which has a two-year backlog of
complaints from our hospital and others around the state. Management has stated they hope to
increase staffing levels in Med Surg to 1 to 5 for certain acuity levels that are currently 1 to 3, and
even higher at nighttime. At a time when they are seeking aggressive changes to staffing levels, we
cannot risk having Med Surg somehow forced into such high levels that could remain that way for up
to two years before the Oregon Health Authority would intervene. We need these protections in our
contract now, so that the grievance procedure (that our employer follows for all other workplace
issues) would be followed if a violation of the Oregon Hospital Nurse Staffing Law occurred.

Safe staffing is fundamental to the health and safety of our patients. Recruiting and retaining nurses
in Surgical Services (and any other future department effected by major reduction in scheduled
hours) in the end effects patient care, if we don't have the nursing staff to properly fill our units. We
have already gotten word of more nurses submitting their resignations and open positions continue
to sit unfilled. For these reasons, our team had to honor the commitment of over 85 percent of
nurses who voted in favor of an informational picket.

We continue to implore management to reach a fair agreement before our picket, and direct all
supporters and the larger community to convey that to management as well. We are at the stage
where we need our hospital's Board of Trustees to intervene and do the right thing for our nurses,
our patients, and our community.

**Informational Picket, Tuesday, Aug. 20**

The informational picket will be held Tuesday, Aug. 20 on the sidewalks of Exchange Street and
Highway 30 in front of CMH (211 Exchange St, Astoria) during three periods: 7-8 a.m., 12-1 p.m.,
and 4:30-6:30 p.m.

We ask all nurses who haven't sign up for a picket shift yet, please click here to sign up as
soon as possible

We are additionally asking all nurses to recruit family, friends, and fellow SEIU members to sign up
on that form as well to attend. SEIU has also issued their legally required 10-day notice to take part
in our informational picket.

We are encouraged to see that standing together made so much movement towards a fair
agreement today! If we continue to stand together, we know we will reach a fair agreement! Our
spirits are raised as we see SEIU, teachers unions, longshoreman, nurses from around the state,
community members and leaders, and so many more lining up their support for our picket. One of
the core parts of these negotiations has been a genuine lack of respect for the voices of nurses to
protect our workplace and our patients, and we know that management is going to hear that loud
and clear next Tuesday.

We'll see you on the picket line,

Your ONA Bargaining Team