Workers’ Rights Board
Protect Nurses, Protect the Community: Hearing On Providence Nurses

RESOLUTION

Panel members were deeply disturbed by what we have heard at this hearing. It is clear that Providence has not been a responsible employer. It has risked the lives of its nurses and patients by its refusal to meet widely accepted safety and health standards.

Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses at Providence Health have sought a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would guarantee them access to needed personal protection equipment (PPE), timely exposure notification, regular access to COVID-19 tests, pandemic leave without having to use their vacation leave, and a workers compensation presumption for COVID-19.

Providence, while trumpeting its commitment to the highest health standards and service, has refused to enter into that MOU.

It pains us that we have to remind Providence that we remain in a pandemic and that further delays can cost lives. At a minimum it is driving nurses, fearful for their own lives and those of their patients, exhausted by unsafe scheduling, and thrown onto their own resources by a distrustful Providence administration, to leave Providence in search of other employment.

As we have heard, Providence has responded to demands that it formally agree to theONA’s nurses bill of rights with delays and obfuscations. It is this pattern of disregard for the lives of health care workers and patients that leads us to our most important recommendation, that Providence end its delaying tactics and engage with its nurses to immediately agree, in writing, to implement the nurses’ bill of rights. Doing so will bring Providence into line with other regional health care providers. Certainly that is not asking too much of an institution that claims to be motivated by a higher calling.
Approval of the bill of rights will help ensure that the issues we heard about tonight—the challenge of gaining access to appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE), the lack of timely exposure notification and access to COVID-19 tests, and the denial of pandemic leave from day one and a workers compensation presumption for COVID-19—will be satisfactorily addressed.

We resolve to put together our findings from this panel hearing with our areas of concern for the nurses, their patients, and our community into a report from the Workers' Rights Board for publication and distribution to key decision makers.