

Why did the Michigan Medicine nurses union turn its “Contract Campaign Ally Meeting” into a private event?

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The University of Michigan Professional Nurse Council (UMPNC), which is affiliated with the Michigan Nurses Association (MNA), converted a public event at Southeast Park in Ann Arbor, Michigan, planned for last Thursday, into a private invitation-only affair, with all those attending vetted by the union.

The MNA-UMPNC announced through social media that “allies” of the nearly 6,000 nurses, who are facing the expiration of their contract with Michigan Medicine on June 30, needed to send an email to a union representative to obtain the “location and details” of the event.

It is not surprising that the leadership of the MNA-UMPNC would make such a decision in the final weeks before the expiration of the contract. It has been clear since negotiations began on March 15 that the union has no intention of mobilizing the membership in strike action to defeat the concessions demanded by Michigan Medicine.

In its latest bargaining update, the union leadership has noted the attacks by Michigan Medicine management on workplace safety, excessive on-call hours and abuse of nurses seeking medical leave of absence in the current contract negotiations.

Another area of concern for nurses is the demand by management for “unit incentives,” which would have the effect of undermining the unity of nurses and pit one unit against another. However, the union gives no indication of what it is going to do to defeat these encroachments on workplace rights.

Far from it, on the question of incentives, the bargaining update says, “We are interested in incorporating ‘functional vacancy’ data to establish incentives in the contract and have short staffing

addressed in departments that are suffering.” In other words, just like on all basic questions, the union is siding with hospital management and preparing to accept a policy that would be detrimental to the nurses’ interests.

Meanwhile, the union has not put forward a single compensation demand of its own against the intransigence of Michigan Medicine, which has not budged throughout the negotiations on its pathetic offer of pay increases which are less than half the rate of inflation, effectively resulting in a pay cut for nurses.

Rather than turn to the tens of thousands of hospital staff, students, other university employees or the working class in Ann Arbor in a mass struggle against the multibillion-dollar Michigan Medicine, the leadership of the MNA-UMPNC is calling on nurses to circulate a toothless “Community Petition” that will be presented to the University of Michigan Regents at their next board meeting on June 16.

The petition calls on the regents to “negotiate a fair contract” that will end the hospital understaffing crisis, establish “fair wages” and end “unsafe mandatory overtime.” However, as was clear from the previous regents meeting, the board claims that it is not involved in the negotiations and the demands on petitions will fall on deaf ears.

Nurses at Michigan Medicine are confronting a dual struggle against both the management of the hospital and the union, which has repeatedly demonstrated it is working to block any fight against the administration and, as it has done in the past, demand that a complete sellout be accepted.

The website of the MNA does not even mention the fact that one of its affiliated unions is engaged in a

bitter contract struggle against one of the largest and most prestigious medical systems in the entire state of Michigan. This is further proof of the plans by the union to isolate and defeat the Michigan Medicine nurses.

Rather than draw the attention of its members to this important struggle, which will have a lasting impact on nurses across the state, the union has been busy endorsing and promoting the 2022 election campaigns of various Democratic Party candidates, including Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

These are the reasons why the MNA-UMPNC made the decision to close down a public meeting on June 2, which was ostensibly set up to build public support for the Michigan Medicine nurses, and turn it into an invitation-only event.



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