

Vote “Yes” to strike for safe nurse-to-patient ratios! Mobilize hospital staff, university community against Michigan Medicine strikebreaking!

Michigan Medicine Rank-and-File Committee
31 August 2022

Are you a nurse or health care worker at Michigan Medicine? Contact the WSWs Health Care Workers Newsletter using the form at the end of this article. What are the main issues you face at your workplace? What do you think needs to be done? All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Dear Michigan Medicine brothers and sisters,

We are Michigan Medicine workers who have formed the Michigan Medicine Rank and File Committee (MMRFC) to unite all workers behind the nurses and secure victory in their contract fight for safe working conditions, decent wages and an end to mandatory overtime.

This is the fight of all workers at the health system. We are in a powerful position to win and reverse years of concessions contracts, layoffs and speedup.

We urge nurses to vote “Yes” for strike action at the meetings that are being held this week. There is widespread support for a walkout to end the intolerable working conditions at Michigan Medicine.

Throughout the contract negotiations, nurses have spoken out about the impact on their lives of the staffing shortage. However, it is critical that we understand what we are up against.

The fact that management is recruiting “replacement nurses” proves that it will stop at nothing to maintain intolerable working conditions. Its goal is to force through a new nurses’ contract that will intensify the staffing crisis.

We have to take the conduct of this struggle into our own hands. The MNA-UMPNC (Michigan Nurses Association-University of Michigan Professional Nurse

Council) leadership wasted precious time by refusing to call a strike when the contract expired on July 1. It gave Michigan Medicine time to hire scabs and failed to inform us about the strikebreaking operation for days on end.

The union leadership has kept nurses in the dark about what is going on in the negotiations. It has isolated nurses from the rest of the hospital staff and instead told us to appeal to the wealthy members of the university Board of Regents, who represent the corporate interests behind the anti-worker drive.

The MNA-UMPNC has refused to put forward specific demands on safe staffing or any other issue we face. First the union told us that going on strike was illegal. Now, after calling an unfair labor practices work stoppage authorization vote, it is telling us that we will receive no strike pay in the event of a walkout.

We say: Use the MNA’s millions in assets to give us strike pay and forgo the union executives’ six-figure salaries so that we can wage a fight to win!

We have formed the MMRFC to unite all employees at Michigan Medicine in a common struggle for what we need, not what the hospital or the union says is possible. In calling for a “Yes” vote for strike action, we are putting forward the following demands:

? Safe nurse-to-patient ratios that are mandatory and non-negotiable. Michigan Medicine must hire enough nurses to guarantee the following ratios:

- General Care—3:1 day shift; 4:1 night shift
- Telemetry—3:1
- ICU/PICU—1:1
- Noncritical ICU patients or stepdown status—2:1

- Pediatric Care—2:1
- In-Patient Care—1:1
- Labor and Delivery—1:1
- Rehab and Behavioral Health—2:1

? End the mandatory overtime and extended on-call hours that have destroyed the work-life balance of nurses. All overtime must be voluntary and on-call hours eliminated.

? A pay increase of 15 percent and a cost-of-living escalator to keep pace with inflation.

? Upgrades to PPE against COVID-19 and monkeypox. We need sufficient protective equipment, including well-fitting masks that are N95 or better, to protect our patients and ourselves.

? Full strike pay provided by the MNA-UMPNC and the Michigan AFL-CIO.

? Answer strikebreaking with a general strike of Michigan labor!

Winning these demands requires that strike action begin as soon as possible after the vote. Everything the MNA-UMPNC has done up to this point shows that even if nurses authorize a strike, the union will try to push through a sellout before the walkout begins. If it cannot block a strike, it will try to isolate us, starve us out and ram through a deal that meets none of our demands.

Therefore, after voting “Yes” to authorize the strike, we must prepare the joint mobilization of the entire staff at Michigan Medicine, along with students and University of Michigan employees, behind the nurses. The threat to hire strikebreaking nurses is a serious one and must be answered with mass action to shut down the hospital.

To make this happen, we need a new bargaining committee, elected by the rank-and-file, which will not compromise on our basic demands. The bargaining sessions must be made public and live-streamed so that we know what is going on.

Time and time again, rather than calling a strike, the MNA-UMPNC has told us to put our hopes in Democratic Party officials who say, “We have your backs,” while doing the bidding of the corporate interests that control both big business parties.

We are in a battle against the alliance of Michigan Medicine with the entire political establishment of Democrats and Republicans that stands behind the University of Michigan and its attack on our rights!

We can and must win this fight! Our health, the health of our patients and family members, our very jobs and livelihoods depend on it.

We should follow the example of Will Lehman, a rank-and-file auto worker and socialist who is running for international president of the UAW. His campaign is not aimed at reforming the UAW bureaucracy, but mobilizing auto workers to abolish the corrupt union apparatus and return power to the rank-and-file workers.

We call on all Michigan Medicine workers who agree with us to join the MMRFC and take part in fighting for this winning strategy.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact