

# “I was born here, this is my hospital”: Staff and residents respond to the looming closure of New York facility

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The closure of New York City’s Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital (MSBIH) in Lower Manhattan still looms nearly a month after a New York appellate court judge issued a temporary stay order blocking the original March 26 closing date. The Trump administration’s attacks on public health science have expanded since the ruling, adding to the urgency regarding the facility’s looming closure.

If the 696-bed teaching hospital on 16th Street closes, nearby hospitals, Bellevue and New York Presbyterian will struggle to manage additional patients. Both hospitals are suffering from understaffing and high caseloads, initially made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and worse still by the the reduction of wages and benefits, supported by unions and the Democratic Party.

A transporter who has been employed at MSBIH since 2008 told a WSWS reporting team, “It’s sad. I’ve worked at this hospital for 17 years. The management surprised us; they informed us they would evacuate the patients and close. What happens if someone in the neighborhood has a heart attack? They will die by the time anyone gets them to Bellevue.”

“Ever since people in the neighborhood learned about the closing,” she said, “They have come in or talked to us on the street, and some are crying. They ask, ‘Why are you closing? My doctor is here; where will we go?’ We tell them we’re sorry; it’s not our fault; we didn’t make the decision.” She concluded, “That’s my biggest worry about the hospital closing—the neighborhood. Patients come first.”

Regarding the union’s (1199SEIU) response to the imminent closure, she said, “They haven’t done much. I heard workers go [to the main Mount Sinai where the

union reps are located] to ask for help, they don’t see the union [reps] much. They are firing people like crazy over there, and the union doesn’t do much. They say it’s about money. They are supposed to back us up and protect us, but they aren’t doing anything to help us. If the union won’t say anything to protect us, how can we say anything?”

An area resident, James, who lives two blocks from the facility, told WSWS reporters, “It shouldn’t close. There is no justification for ever getting rid of emergency room hospital beds. It should remain open.”

Regarding the loss of the hospital’s psychiatric facility, he said, “Where’s the closest psychiatric hospital—Bellevue—twenty—thirty blocks up? But regardless of what the service is—you can’t effectively serve the city with fewer beds; that doesn’t work. The fewer beds you have, the less you can treat the 10 million people in New York City.”

In response to questions about Robert F. Kennedy Junior’s attack on the Department of Health and Human Services, James added, “Well, the decision to close the facility began before that, but these attacks just sped it up. Now we have to base our entire healthcare off of one guy who decided he’s the person who needs to be in charge because his name is Kennedy? I’m sorry, but no!”

“I was born here,” stated a former area resident and employee for the New York Board of Education. “This is my hospital. It’s gonna be the worst!” Now the neighborhood will just have Bellevue—that’s it—and Bellevue is crowded!”

She exclaimed, “I’ll fight—this affects us too—this affects everybody. They gotta keep this open so everybody can keep their job—if these people are out of

work, what's going to happen? Where are they going—how are they gonna live? Unemployment doesn't pay enough. This has to stop!"

Healthcare workers are under attack nationwide. Everywhere, the unions that claim to represent these workers are led by bureaucrats whose primary concern is the social layer their six-figure salaries put them in.

The extensive campaign to dismantle health services, spearheaded by the would-be dictator Donald Trump and newly installed Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has already taken a toll, evidenced by the firing of 10,000 NHS public health workers, all without even a token resistance from their union. At the same time, as this assault on the working class unfolds, the Democratic Party collaborates.

Healthcare workers determined to fight for better pay and working conditions as well as their democratic rights must form workplace committees, join the International Workers Association of Rank and File Committees (IWA-RFC), to mobilize the working class in defense of public health and against Trump's drive to dictatorship.



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