

New York City workers urge broadening strike of 15,000 nurses

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The enormous support which the 15,000 strong nurses strike in New York City has received in the working class in the city, nationally and internationally, continues to grow. The nurses on the picket line feel this directly by visits from other workers and by the honking of cars and trucks that pass them. But the support is both more widespread and deeply felt by hundreds of thousands in the city that are not immediately present.

Hundreds of thousands of municipal workers, including 37,000 city transit workers, have contracts coming up this year. There is not only broad support but a growing feeling that a united movement of the working class is the only way to address skyrocketing cost of living.

In Minneapolis, a general strike has been scheduled for next Friday, January 23 in opposition to the rampage by ICE throughout the city and Trump's threats to declare the Insurrection Act. The union bureaucracy had earlier canceled a teachers' strike the day after the shooting of Renee Good; that it felt compelled to call a general strike is a sign of fear that workers may act with or without their approval.

In Minneapolis, New York City and across the country and the world, a mass working class movement is needed to confront the entrenched power of the corporate oligarchy, whose global operations are centered in Wall Street only a few miles away from the striking hospitals. But to do this, workers must take the initiative and organize themselves in rank-and-file strike committees in order to overcome the resistance of the pro-corporate union bureaucrats.

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to transit workers at one of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) subway stations.

A cleaner with six years' service, said, "I think a city-wide general strike is a good thing to do. The people who are in power are not publicizing the issues, like the safe staffing nurses are fighting for. First, for a city-wide

strike, there needs to be a lot of strikers. 15,000 nurses on strike is good, but every hospital should be on strike. It has to be a team effort. But the issues are bigger than just the nurses. Everyone should take part.

"It is hard for transit workers to strike with our contract because it is hard to reach out to other transit workers. There must be demands most transit workers want like higher pay, more vacation time and more job picks coming on time. Sometimes the bids to pick the jobs you want don't come until a year or ten months late. For cleaners, it is never on time.

"I doubt that any raise will be higher than inflation. They don't want us to be rich or even come to work feeling good about our job. We are just here. They don't care how dangerous it is to clean on trains with people who attack us"

A cleaner with seven years asked: "Where are all the unions at?" referring to the other hospital workers unions. "Where is 1199 SEIU [Service Employees International Union]? Everyone is paying their dues. It's that the union leadership doesn't care. I used to be in 1199. The unions used to be strong. Now it is more about the money thing. I believe rank-and-file workers should have an organization against the unions, Democrats and Republicans. It is not just working now. I agree there should be a general strike across the city."

Another cleaner said: "You have to do things the hard way to get things done. Safety is always a number one priority. I did home health care before I came here. I used to have one-on-one care. When they overload you, you just get worn out. And if you take a day off, they fire you. It's no good that they have to pay more for their health care."

A train operator said: "I support the strike. The CEOs are getting millions a year. Nurses work very hard and they care. Hopefully there should be an entire city general strike. And it is the only way you can do that is the only

way you can win the nurses strike is you have to do that. There has to be a citywide general strike.”

From the picket lines

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to nurses on the picket line during the fourth day of their strike Thursday. “The most important thing is patient safety for nurses,” one nurse said. “We care for our patients down to the core. Nobody knows the Bronx like the nurses here. These patients can be your grandfather, your grandmother, your brother, your sister, and no patient deserves to be in a hallway. Every patient deserves a bed and a room and proper care. The ED [Emergency Department] is completely overcrowded.”

Another worker explained: “We’re out here today because our patients are a priority and safe staffing makes for safe patients ... [it allows us] to actually function without having to worry about harm or anything like that coming to us or our patients as well. At the end of the day ... having the right ratios and the right staff is really where it comes down to.”

“Now we are going into a pretty bad flu season and as it’s going to peak we’re going to get hit hard again. Hopefully [it won’t be] as bad as COVID was, but ... things will potentially escalate quickly and in a big city like this it can happen fast. And we hope, we hope not, but we’d like to have the support to be ready for it.”

Another nurse said: “Everything in New York is going up. Have you ever seen the price of eggs, the price of milk? You can’t afford to live here anymore. People are moving out. So, of course, you have to get an increased pay.”

Nurses raised the expiration of their own healthcare and demands to protect pensions. “Our health benefit is still covered until the end of this month. After that, we don’t know what’s going on with our health benefit. They have not signed off on our pension. I’ve been here for 18 years. My pension is extremely important to me. And many of our older nurses, they’re also fighting for their pension.”

“What is it going to look like when we all retire? And that’s every single member in New York. How could we survive without healthcare? And if you have worked for so many years in an organization. How can you survive without a good pension?”

Outpouring on social media

The response to the nurses’ strike on social media has been overwhelming. Hundreds of thousands of people have viewed WSWS videos and articles published on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, X, Youtube and Reddit. Thousands of spirited and enthusiastic comments have been posted there by users, including many nurses and other healthcare workers from around the world.

On a healthcare subreddit, one person remarked on the same video: “Awesome! The way they are overworked is insanely dangerous for both them and anyone in need of medical assistance. I hope this catches on in more places.” In response, another user said, “The entire country should strike.”

Many were outraged to learn from one video that the nurses themselves have been without healthcare since the start of the year, even before the strike.

“Honestly from a nurse here in England this almost brings me to tears. Just doing our best to do the jobs we trained to love and care for people wholeheartedly with safety!”

Another nurse wrote: “The nurses sacrifice everything—their own health, both mental and physical—with either insurance with the deductible so high they can’t afford treatment, or they get instructions to ask for marketplace insurance [subsidized private insurance under the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare]. We are exposed to everything that the patients have. Sometimes even the low grade PPE that is supplied isn’t enough to prevent us from getting sick and then management rides you and threatens you because you are sick.”



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