

“The organization of a general strike requires the initiative of the working class.”

Healthcare workers support striking New York nurses in online meeting

Our reporter
26 January 2026

More than 100 workers participated in an online meeting titled “The New York nurses’ strike and the fight against the financial oligarchy” that the *World Socialist Web Site* hosted yesterday. The meeting was held in support of the 15,000 nurses who are beginning the third week of their strike at four private nonprofit hospitals in New York. It took place one day after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents murdered Alex Pretti, an intensive care nurse and US citizen, in Minneapolis.

During the meeting, panelists explained the connection between the New York nurses’ strike and the struggle of workers in Minneapolis against the federal occupation by ICE and other forces. They reviewed how the corporations, the government and the unions isolate workers and explained that the crisis demands the organization of rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions and both political parties, for a general strike against dictatorship.

The opening report, given by Erik Schreiber, placed the New York nurses’ strike in the context of an escalating assault on democratic rights, citing the ICE killing of Pretti as a warning of how the ruling class will respond to opposition. The speaker argued that the nurses’ struggle and mass protests against ICE repression are inseparable parts of a single conflict against the financial oligarchy.

Detailing the 14th day of the strike, the report exposed hospital management’s intransigence, multimillion-dollar spending on strikebreakers and the control of the hospitals by billionaire trustees. It reviewed New York State Nurses Association’s (NYSNA) ongoing efforts to isolate the strike, Governor Kathy Hochul’s efforts to break it by allowing out-of-state scabs to practice in New York and the role of Mayor Zohran Mamdani in covering for Hochul and sowing illusions in the possibility of class

compromise. The speaker called for independent rank-and-file committees to unite nurses nationally and link their struggle to a broader working-class movement against the profit system and authoritarian rule.

“The New York nurses’ strike must become part of an upsurge that overthrows the financial oligarchy and establishes workers’ control,” he said. “Only by these means can the nurses win safe staffing, provide universal healthcare as a human right and defend the dignity and rights of all.”

In his report from Minneapolis, Jerry White, labor editor of the WSWWS, described mass opposition to the Trump administration’s ICE repression. The administration responded to demonstrations involving more than 50,000 workers and youth with escalating violence, which culminated in the killing of Pretti. White detailed the ICE raids, kidnappings and assaults on immigrants and citizens that have been carried out to terrorize the population, with the backing of both Republicans and Democrats. Citing the 1934 general strike in Minneapolis, he emphasized the growing calls for a nationwide general strike, while condemning the unions and Democrats for blocking collective action. White stressed that workers in Minneapolis and striking nurses in New York face the same financial oligarchy.

“You are resisting in New York City. The working class in Minneapolis is resisting,” said White. “The organization of a general strike requires the initiative of the working class. The preparation of a powerful nationwide strike must not be left to union bureaucrats, let alone the Democratic Party. They will do nothing. What is necessary is the formation of rank-and-file committees in every factory, work location and neighborhood.”

Katy, a medical-surgical and oncology nurse and

Socialist Equality Party member, warned that the New York nurses' strike must be taken out of the hands of the trade unions and expanded nationally. Drawing on her experience in the 2022 Stanford healthcare strike, she described how union officials imposed a sellout contract that worsened staffing conditions. She reported on the impending strike of 31,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses in California and Hawaii. "Kaiser's investments include companies like CoreCivic and the GEO Group, which run ICE detention centers and provide healthcare and living conditions that are criminally substandard," she said.

Katy also highlighted the five-month-long Genesis/Henry Ford strike in Michigan, detailing the brutal conditions imposed by healthcare financialization. She argued that nurses nationwide face the same corporate assault on healthcare, democratic rights and living standards. She stressed the immense potential of healthcare workers to unite across states in a broader struggle against austerity, repression and authoritarian rule.

Other healthcare workers in attendance made significant contributions to the discussion. "Nurses' working conditions are directly related to patients' care conditions," said a research assistant. "I've seen firsthand how ... NewYork-Presbyterian's refusal to meet these basic demands of the nurses relating to safe staffing levels, fair compensation and working conditions directly harms patients." Summarizing management's priorities, he said, "They care about their bottom line."

A physician and former professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, described having been fired for opposing the genocide of the Palestinians. "What was extremely shocking to me is none of the unions worked to speak out about what was happening to workers in Gaza," she said. "And now every single hospital has been bombed in Gaza." Today, ICE is using tactics it learned from the Israeli military on the streets of Minneapolis, she said. Effective resistance can only come from the working class, she added: "The ability to tank the economic engine of the United States rests in workers' hands."

A child-and-adolescent psychiatrist in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area voiced her solidarity with "our nursing colleagues from California to New York." She noted that her patients are no longer coming to their day program, because it is not safe for them to leave their homes. "It behooves us in the medical field to all ally ourselves and align ourselves with a sustained general strike to save lives," she said.

WSWS reporter Robert Milkowski described his conversations with striking New York nurses. The mood on the picket lines is determined but increasingly strained, as nurses face mounting financial pressure from lost wages, lack of strike pay and loss of health insurance. Many nurses have been forced to seek additional work, and supporters have launched grassroots fundraising efforts. Nurses have expressed concerns about possible concessions and the union's isolation of their strike by withdrawing strike notices at other hospitals. Milkowski noted a growing awareness among nurses, although "framed within existing contractual and legal limits," of the need for broader unity and coordination with healthcare workers nationally. The solidarity that has begun to develop in response to the ICE terror in Minneapolis has fostered this awareness.

Jesse, a New York City public school teacher, described the nurses' strike as part of a broader struggle to defend public services and democratic rights, drawing on his experience building rank-and-file organizations in education. Nurses and educators both face understaffing, unsafe workplaces and the subordination of all concerns to profit, he explained. Based on this unity of interests, he called for rank-and-file committees linking workers in healthcare, education and other sectors nationally and internationally. He outlined essential requirements for building such committees, including democratic structures and transparent negotiations.

The WSWS urges all workers and young people who are interested in supporting the New York nurses, building rank-and-file committees and organizing a general strike to contact us.



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