

New York nurses' strike enters third week as union prepares to accept major concessions

Robert Milkowski
28 January 2026

Now in its third week, the New York nurses' strike has entered a critical phase. The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) is moving to prepare a sellout deal, with concessions on wages and healthcare being made in talks over the past several days with management.

Reports indicate that NYSNA has reduced its wage demands at Mount Sinai, retreating from an initial demand of 30 percent wage increases over three years. According to press reports, the union is now proposing increases of 7 percent in the first year, 6 percent in the second and 5 percent in the third, for a total of only 18 percent.

The climbdown, coming as negotiations resume, would represent a major concession to hospital management, under conditions where nurses are already struggling with the impossible cost of living in New York City.

Over the weekend, NYSNA announced agreements with some hospital networks that they claimed would "maintain" nurses' current healthcare plan." NYSNA hailed the announcement as clearing "a major hurdle," describing the preservation of existing benefits as a victory. Previously, management had threatened to eliminate the plans altogether; nurses' health insurance ended at the start of the year, even before the strike.

In reality, the agreement paves the way for significant cuts to healthcare spending. NewYork-Presbyterian says that trustees of the nurses' health plan would form a committee to examine "potential savings and programs."

This method essentially conceals future cuts until nurses will have already voted to approve the contract under false pretenses, leaving them without even a semblance of democratic control.

But nurses' current health plans were already grossly inadequate, leaving nurses in the bitterly ironic situation of being unable to obtain medical care at the hospitals where they work.

These concessions are being made in defiance of

NYSNA membership. Striking nurses should hold mass meetings and elect trusted nurses to a rank-and-file strike committee. Only through action from below will they be able to override these decisions, impose democratic control over contract talks and prepare for an expansion of the strike.

NYSNA bureaucrats are making these concessions at precisely the point where the position of the nurses is strongest. On the West Coast, more than 31,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses and other health care workers have launched a strike. In Minneapolis and around the country support is growing for a general strike against the ICE rampage, following the execution-style murder of VA nurse Alex Pretti.

What terrifies the bureaucracy is a movement of the working class which undermines their corrupt relations with the Democratic Party and with management. They see as their role the imposition of "labor peace" and imposing one round of concessions after the next.

This is why NYSNA called strikes at only 4 of 15 hospitals in the metro area, canceling strike action at other facilities even without finalized tentative agreements. And over the past three weeks, the bureaucrats have provided no strike pay to nurses on the picket line, as has historically been standard practice during a strike.

For example, strike pay at the United Auto Workers is \$500 a week; and the UAW is also controlled by a bureaucracy which is helping carry out layoffs and supporting Trump's "America First" trade war. But NYSNA is not even giving workers that level of inadequate strike pay.

The purpose is to soften nurses up at the remaining four hospitals for the inevitable sellout. Without strike pay, nurses face intensifying financial pressures, forcing many to take on additional work and to forgo medical treatment and the purchase of needed medications. Union officials have instead directed nurses to apply for unemployment

benefits.

According to the latest federal filings, NYSNA has over \$101 million in net assets; National Nurses United, to which NYSNA is affiliated, has over \$56 million. These resources, which come from nurses' dues money, must be taken over by nurses and used to adequately provision their fight!

The strike should also be expanded, including to the 11 other facilities in New York City, and joint actions organized from below with other key sections of the city's working class. Nurses should establish lines of contact with the striking Kaiser nurses over social media to prepare national actions and to build a nationwide movement in defense of public health against Wall Street.

This movement must be independent of the entire political establishment. Governor Kathy Hochul intervened by authorizing hospitals to bring in out-of-state nurses to replace strikers, directly strengthening management's position. At the city level, Mayor Zohran Mamdani has claimed support for the strike, but has publicly called for a swift settlement, aligning himself with Hochul.

Conditions are emerging for a powerful national movement of the working class. The killing of Minneapolis ICU nurse Alex Pretti by federal agents has sparked protests and solidarity actions among healthcare workers, as well as growing support for the idea of a general strike. At the same time, the Trump administration's withdrawal from the World Health Organization highlights the subordination of public health to financial interests.

Preventing a sellout and sustaining the struggle now requires a break from the existing framework. The formation of independent rank-and-file organizations and the unification of healthcare workers nationally—including with the expanding strike at Kaiser Permanente—are essential to advancing a broader working-class struggle against the financial oligarchy.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact