

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eagleville Nurses and Techs Vote Unanimously to Authorize a Strike

Management's utter disregard for the staffing crisis at Eagleville Hospital and the safety risks it heightens for both patients and caregivers have led nurses and techs there to signal their willingness to strike, via an in-person strike authorization vote, to improve conditions for their patients and themselves.

Conshohocken, PA - Pushed to the brink by understaffing that undermines patient safety and exposes caregivers to the risk of violence, more than half the nurses at Eagleville Hospital, a behavioral health and addictions treatment center in Montgomery County, have either retired or moved to other facilities.

This blatant disregard for patient and staff safety led the nurses and techs who remain at the hospital to unanimously vote yesterday to authorize a strike.

"In the middle of a retention and recruitment crisis, management is demanding concessions from the nurses and professional staff" says Kendra Barkasi, R.N., president of Eagleville Hospital Nurses and Techs United. "Two of the hospital's residential units hold 40 patients each and management is proposing to cut the staffing, demanding that just one nurse and one tech are assigned to each unit, regardless of the acuity of the patients within it. When there's a code [an unexpected medical or nonmedical emergency], there's no one who can come assist, because other units are just as short-staffed. Fights among patients are a frequent occurrence, and there's no one to come help. It isn't safe for anyone, patient or staff member."

The nurses and techs at Eagleville Hospital are currently in bargaining for a new contract; their existing contract expired on September 30, 2021. Their primary issues are:

- **Staffing:** In the 15 months since the start of the pandemic, more than half the nurses employed at the hospital have left, retiring or taking jobs elsewhere due to the unsafe working conditions created when bedside caregivers are assigned too many patients.
- **Unsafe working conditions:** Staff members have been repeatedly assaulted by patients, and management refuses to shield them from harm with additional staff or protective measures, despite many requests to do so. Compounding the problem are unsafe staffing levels and an unconscionable lack of COVID protocols. See below.
- **Absence of COVID protocols.** Patients are not routinely tested for COVID upon admission--even during the height of the pandemic--and they still aren't tested upon admission now. Despite multiple requests by staff, management has yet to install the

plexiglass barriers required by the OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard that went into effect early July 2021.

The strike authorization vote allows the union's Bargaining Committee to submit a 10-day strike notice to the hospital if they deem it necessary.

"It's well past time for Eagleville Hospital management to do the right thing for their patients and their staff," says Eagleville nurse Ken Harner, R.N. "I hope yesterday's vote is a wake-up call for them."

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth.