

PRESS RELEASE

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Warren General Caregivers Submit 10-Day Strike Notice

Nurses and healthcare professionals from Warren General Hospital stood together outside the hospital in October to alert the community to the unsafe conditions within it and to implore hospital management to prioritize patient safety and agree to include safe staffing guidelines in the caregivers' contract. Their pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Today, the caregivers signalled their willingness to walk out to protect their patients. They submitted their 10-Day Strike notice.

Warren, PA - The 114 frontline nurses and healthcare workers who make up the Warren General Hospital Professional Employees Association (PEA) have been on the front lines of the COVID crisis for more than 18 months, willingly sacrificing their own health and endangering their families to care for the Warren community and keep the doors of the hospital open. Yet in bargaining with PEA for a new contract, hospital management has ignored calls to prioritize quality patient care and include staffing guidelines in the PEA contract, even though research has proven safe staffing saves patient lives and reduces caregiver burnout. At the same time, the hospital has persisted in trying to cut the caregivers' retirement funding, a move that could compound the staffing issues in the hospital, driving staff away from the bedside.

The National Labor Relations Act requires all labor organizations to give healthcare employers a minimum of 10 days' notice before a strike to ensure the safety of the patients within the facility. The Warren General Hospital caregivers submitted their 10-day strike notice today, signalling their willingness to walk out to protect their patients and their professions.

"Safe staffing is a quality of care issue," says PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N. "This is especially true during a pandemic, when patient volumes are high and every community member is a potential patient."

An independent evaluator of care in hospitals agrees that Warren General desperately needs more nurses. Twice a year, the Leapfrog Group uses more than 30 national performance measures from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services plus additional data to assign nearly 3,000 acute adult-care hospitals across the U.S. a letter grade (A through F), representing a hospital's overall performance in keeping patients safe from preventable harm and medical errors. Leapfrog published their Fall 2021 Hospital Safety Grades just last month. Warren General received a "D," partially due to not having "enough qualified nurses" and not having "effective leadership to prevent errors."

"It's well past time for Warren General management to show some leadership--to do the right thing for their patients and their staff," says Rose Colucci, RN, who has been a nurse at Warren General for 36 years. "I hope the strike notice is a wake-up call for them."

According to data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, enrollment in the commonwealth's R.N. programs has increased by almost 50 percent in recent decades. But hospitals can't retain nurses at the bedside under increasingly unsafe conditions.

For more information on safe staffing, Warren General Hospital's finances, and more, check out www.warrencuts.com, which the caregivers themselves launched last month to alert the community to what's going on inside their hospital.

PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth. The Warren General Hospital Professional Employees Association is a local of PASNAP.