

## Point-by-Point Response to the United Steel Workers on August 11 (Day 8 of Strike)

Volume 4 – August 11, 2023

*UNION STATEMENT: “It’s not about the money – it’s about safe staffing.”*

**RWJUH Response:** If it is not about the money, why does the union continue to ask for more money at each bargaining session? The union agreed to the MOA on July 17, then retracted and asked for more money on August 1 in the form of higher wages in year 1, plus increased on call pay equating to a 40% increase to current on call rates. Then, in the most recent negotiating session of August 10 – after rejecting the hospital’s offer of August 2 – the union not only maintained its August 1 proposal for a large increase in Year 1, but then added a larger wage increase for Year 2. While the union continues to increase its proposals, the hospital continues to incur more costs for the replacement nurses taking care of our patients in the absence of the striking nurses.

**RWJUH is committed to safe staffing across all of its units. At the union’s request, the hospital memorialized these staffing levels in its proposal of August 2 – the union rejected this offer after leaving it on the table, without comment, for 1 week.**

*UNION STATEMENT: “If a nurse calls out sick, they’re basically saying they don’t have to meet the ratios.”*

**RWJUH Response:** Incorrect. Hospital nursing guidelines are based on patient volume and acuity. In the guidelines proposed by the hospital, and that are our guiding principle today, we will bring nurses onto shifts to address our patients’ acuity and the patient volume across the hospital.

**We have a robust float pool that we are committed to growing and right-sizing with clinical nurse input for critical care and med-surg. We utilize these nurses when possible, when call outs occur.**

**Call-outs on RWJUH units have been a perpetual issue among our Union nurses, especially call-outs without a doctor’s note or reasonable explanation for not reporting to work. For example, the week prior to the strike walk-out, RWJUH nurses called out at a very high level peaking at 22 in one day. This is in stark contrast to 0 to 1 call-outs per day during the past week.**

*UNION STATEMENT: “I think the hospital is going to do the same thing. They’re going to say we’ll keep you on for another week and we’ll go from there. There was no hope at all. They did not counter propose with anything.”*

**RWJUH Response: Again, incorrect. The hospital had delivered USW Local 4-200 several offers and counteroffers, including the one that was endorsed by the union and signed by both parties in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on July 17 and that union leaders failed to ratify with their members. The hospital has always provided a response or counterproposal in a timely fashion and always has accepted requests to negotiate in good faith.**

**At the last session, the union went backwards asking for even more money than they did in their previous counter proposal. That certainly was not an effort to reach a settlement with the hospital. For the past three months up until the strike, the hospital actively met with the union in good faith to negotiate a new contract for the RWJUH nurses that reflects their value to our patients and our organization, and addresses their priorities. Since their contract expired on June 30, the union agreed to stay at work while we negotiated in support of our patients and the rest of the RWJUH family.**

**The union made the decision to walk out and exercise its right to strike and protest on August 4<sup>th</sup>. By doing so it made the decision to leave the bedside.**

**Consequently, the hospital had to engage more than nearly a thousand highly-skilled nurses from national agencies to assume the RWJUH nurses' posts at the bedside during the strike. We are committed to providing full services and care at the hospital for the duration of the strike.**

**We are appropriately staffed with nurses to address both acuity and patient volume.**

#### **Blast Text Communication from Union to Membership Dated August 10**

*UNION STATEMENT: "The simultaneous distribution of Company proposal to Union and bargaining unit members on August 2. We need witnesses who can testify to when, where, and from whom in management they received a copy of the August 2 proposal – and ideally provide the copy of the proposal they received from management."*

**RWJUH Response: Obviously the union does not want its membership to know what the hospital proposed in the hours leading up to the scheduled strike. At 1:32 pm on Wednesday August 2, the labor attorneys for RWJUH advanced the Hospital's counter proposal to the Union, which is documented. If the Union did not immediately send that proposal to its members given the impending strike, that is most unfortunate.**

**The hospital took the extra step of forwarding this proposal to the union membership electronically on the morning of Thursday August 3. This is not only a legal communication, but also a necessary communication based upon what we learned from recent Town Halls. Many nurses clearly do not understand the terms of the MOA.**

*UNION STATEMENT: "Picket line surveillance: We need witnesses who can testify to seeing supervisors videotaping picketing activities and who can identify the supervisors involved."*

**RWJUH Response: The union is trying to distract attention from widespread, unprofessional conduct by some of its members. This conduct has resulted in resident complaints, responses by the police and, most importantly, noise that has been disruptive to our patients. Video of this conduct has been posted by the media and is available on public social media for those that have not seen it.**

*UNION STATEMENT: "Captive audience meetings: We need witnesses who can testify to having been called into captive audience meetings and to what was said at these meetings."*

**RWJUH Response: During the early phases of negotiations, nursing managers, directors and AVPs invited nurses to meet with them to answer any questions on the offers under discussion for the new contract. The meetings were voluntary and offered to everyone. Why is the union trying to stifle communications?**

*UNION STATEMENT: "Direct dealing regarding holiday scheduling: We need witnesses who can testify to having heard supervisor [sic] Courtney Vose make assurances about the ways in which holidays would be scheduled to benefit less senior nurses."*

**RWJUH Response: We stand by our Chief Nursing Officer Courtney Vose and her belief that all nurses should be able to have fair access to vacation and holiday time. We have heard frustration from less senior members of the nursing team that they are unable to schedule themselves for holiday time with their families under the current rules which favor more tenured nurses. We also know that this rule has impeded our ability to recruit more new nurses to the campus. In addition, it has been referred to as reasons to leave RWJUH. This information was frequently repeated to the union negotiations committee.**