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Altoona RNs Vote to Send Notice of Potential Strike

As Negotiations Nearing Deadline, ARHS Board of Directors Steps in to Undermine Progress and Force a Strike Vote.

(Altoona, PA) – Registered nurses at two hospitals that are part of the Altoona Regional Health System voted by an 82% majority to reject the ARHS Board’s proposed contract and authorize the RN negotiating committee to issue a possible strike notice. The vote came a day after an unprecedented interference by the ARHS board of directors, who forced their administrators to take a hard line with nurses, and undermine progress toward agreement on a contract.

“People in our community rely on a strong hospital with staff that provides the best quality care in their time of need. In order to maintain quality care for our patients and make ARHS the hospital of choice, it must become the employer of choice for nurses,” said Sue Delozier, RN in the PACU department and a member of the nurses negotiating committee. “It was reckless and disturbing that our hospital board would force a crisis like this on our community.”

Around 750 registered nurses at Bon Secours Hospital and Altoona Hospital voted to form a union with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare Pennsylvania last May, and have been negotiating their first union contract for the past nine months.

(MORE)

Nurses are standing up for a contract that:

- ✓ Values Care -- Safe nurse staffing is critical for quality patient care. ARHS should agree to a contract that provides nurses an equal voice in setting and monitoring safe staffing levels and the highest quality of care.
- ✓ Values Nurses -- Nurses' wages at Altoona Regional Health System lag far behind other unionized hospitals in the region and in similar communities across the state. ARHS should be a leader in quality by raising wages to recruit and retain experienced nursing staff.
- ✓ Provides an Effective Voice for Nurses in Decisions that Impact their Patients and their Community – The vast majority of nurses at ARHS hospitals want a strong voice for nurses and their union, including a contract that includes a closed “union shop.”

“We formed a union to provide the best quality care for Altoona patients and to respect our fellow nurses,” said Beth Trexler, RN, in Tower 10 at the Altoona Campus. “We are on the front lines of patient care every single day, and it is imperative that nurses have a voice to share their passion and knowledge of how to best take care of our patients.”

Nurses and family members will hold a Community Vigil for Quality Care on Wednesday, March 26, at 4:30 PM at the Fairview United Methodist Church in Altoona.

SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania

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RNs and over 20,000 employees in hospitals, nursing homes, home care, and state facilities. For more information go to www.seihealthcarepa.org