

**September 20, 2021****Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations**Office:** (716) 706-2061 | **Cell:** (716) 228-4886 | **Email:** [jcav@chsbuffalo.org](mailto:jcav@chsbuffalo.org)

## **Mercy Hospital to Remain Open During CWA Strike**

CWA Local 1133 presented Mercy Hospital of Buffalo with a 10-day notice of its intent to take Mercy Hospital associates away from patients' bedsides and on strike beginning October 1 at 6:00 a.m.

"It is inconceivable that the union would lead essential healthcare workers on strike in the midst of an ongoing pandemic," said Eddie Bratko, president of Mercy Hospital. "I want to assure our community that our top priority is the welfare and safety of our patients, and our hospital will remain open and operational during a strike to continue providing safe, high quality care."

A multi-disciplinary team at the hospital has developed a comprehensive strike contingency plan to ensure patients' and the community's healthcare needs are met during the union's strike. This plan involves contracting with a professional staffing agency that has considerable experience in these types of situations. The agency will provide fully licensed, highly experienced, vaccinated temporary replacement nurses and other qualified staff to provide uninterrupted care and service for the duration of the strike.

Local 1133 leaders have been talking for several months with Mercy Hospital associates about the possibility of a strike during these negotiations. More than two dozen state, county and local politicians sent a letter dated September 1 to Catholic Health President & CEO Mark Sullivan referring to a possible strike as a "a disaster for the hospital, the workers, and the entire community" given the ongoing pandemic. The union conducted its strike vote on September 8 and 9 and announced on September 10 that it had the authority to lead approximately 2,000 Mercy Hospital associates out on strike. (A memorandum of understanding agreed to in 2016 by the hospitals and CWA state that the union can only take the Mercy Hospital associates it represents on strike.)

Mercy Hospital's bargaining committee, in conjunction with the bargaining committees at Kenmore Mercy and St. Joseph Campus, has offered to work more days, longer hours and throughout the weekend, in an effort to settle these contracts with the union and avert a strike. They seek to reach fair, market-competitive contracts that will allow the hospitals to continue providing safe, high-quality care and service to our patients and competitive wages and benefits to recruit and retain the best associates.

Mercy Hospital, Kenmore Mercy Hospital, and Sisters of Charity Hospital/St. Joseph Campus have filed unfair labor practice charges against the union with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for engaging in bad faith, surface, and regressive bargaining.

Bratko said, "We remain committed to bargaining in good faith with CWA on the issues that are most important to our associates to reach tentative agreement on new labor contracts, without the CWA leading our associates on strike."

The union has the option to withdraw its 10-day notice before its strike begins.

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