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INDIANA NURSES UNION GIVES STRIKE NOTICE

Nurses plan for 24-hour-strike after months of negotiations

(Indiana, PA): The Indiana Registered Nurses Association provided notice of their intention to strike to the hospital administration earlier today. The strike notice comes after more than a dozen negotiation sessions in which little progress has been made at the bargaining table with the Indiana Regional Medical Center.

Since August, the IRNA bargaining team has proposed reasonable offers to the hospital. The nurses have been willing to make compromises, yet their proposals have been met with draconian demands by the hospital. Those demands include what would result in steep cuts in take-home pay due to the substantial increases the hospital demands that nurses pay for their healthcare.

“What we’re seeing are consistently unreasonable offers by the hospital in bargaining. Just look around Indiana from the IRMC archway to the IRMC fountain, the hospital is not hurting financially yet their priority seems to be saving money on the backs of our nurses. They want us to accept minimal wage increases that don’t keep up with the increases they want us to pay in higher healthcare contributions,” said Kathy Wolfe, a pediatric nurse and IRNA President.

IRMC’s recent healthcare proposal would drive up the employee contributions in some family plans from 2.5 percent to nearly 30 percent. Other items both sides are still far apart on are wages, pension benefits and paid leave.

“We certainly can’t accept these kind of offers that would cost us more and compromise our member’s ability to support themselves and their families,” Wolfe said. “We work long hours, we take care of others day in and day out, we miss out on time with our own families and sacrifice holidays at home to take care of our patients, and this is what IRMC thinks we’re worth – a harsh cut to our take-home pay.”

IRNA plans to hold a one-day strike on Monday, November 26 beginning at 7 a.m. at each hospital entrance. In the strike notice, the nurses offered to return to work on Tuesday, November 27.

“This is not an easy decision, and we certainly don’t take it lightly. As difficult as it is to step away from our patients, we need to stand strong together as nurses now and take care of each other to improve our working conditions and our livelihoods. IRMC needs to understand that trying to strong-arm us by proposing cut after cut is not acceptable. It doesn’t represent the culture of care that nurses try to carry out with every patient who walks through our doors, and it’s disappointing that IRMC as an employer doesn’t share in that culture,” Wolfe said.

Members of the public are welcome to join the nurses on the picket lines. While the nurses proposed dates throughout November to continue bargaining, the next session is scheduled for Nov. 29 with following bargaining dates already agreed to for Nov. 30, Dec. 11, 13 and 20.