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CWA Strike at Mercy Hospital Enters Week Four as Union Shows No Sense of Urgency in Getting 2,000 Members Back to Work

On Friday, CWA's strike at Mercy Hospital of Buffalo entered its fourth week. Many associates, physicians, and community members are expressing increased concern over the union's prolonged work stoppage and suspension of much-needed healthcare services at Mercy Hospital.

"Catholic Health shares the sentiments of our community, patients and families – we want our associates back at Mercy Hospital," said JoAnn Cavanaugh. "The longer the strike goes on, however, we will need to consider all of our options."

In an effort to continue caring for patients and serving the community during the strike, Catholic Health had to extend its engagement with the strike replacement agency again yesterday to ensure the care of approximately 100 inpatients and 100 emergency patients at Mercy Hospital and the Mercy Ambulatory Care Center each day.

"We would have preferred to invest our limited resources in our people, our hospitals and our community," said Cavanaugh. "Four weeks ago, the night before the strike, the hospitals had a fair, market-competitive proposal that included staffing language on the table. CWA leaders told us there was nothing we could do to prevent its strike and walked out of negotiations. We still have an incredibly generous, competitive offer out there today that addresses wages, benefits and staffing."

"The parties made progress this week on contract language about pharmacy benefits, prescription co-pays and overtime pay. But four weeks into its strike, the union still has no sense of urgency to reach an agreement," Cavanaugh said. "We have been waiting for more than a week for CWA to respond to key proposals to end this strike, while the union has spent significant time over the last few days discussing an inconsequential proposal that would allow associates to wear red uniforms on Thursdays."

Since the strike began, nearly 50 nurses have resigned from the hospital, including more than one dozen intensive care unit (ICU) nurses. "This loss of staff, particularly in difficult-to-recruit positions, will only exacerbate the staffing challenges the parties have been trying to resolve in negotiations," Cavanaugh said. As of this afternoon, 95 patients are receiving care in Mercy Hospital.

"We are eager to come to an agreement and begin the healing process that will be essential for everyone to move forward together when CWA's strike is over," Cavanaugh said.

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