

## **Union represented nurses in Wilkes-Barre still without pact**

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REGION, January 28th- Negotiations for a successor labor agreement between the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Professionals (PASNAP) Union and Community Health Systems (CHS) Inc., which is the largest owner of for-profit hospitals in the country, and owns and operates the Wilkes-Barre General Hospital is continuing but the two sides are still far away from reaching a contract.

PASNAP, which is affiliated with the California Nurses Association (CNA), represents approximately 450 nurses employed at the medical center located on North River Street in Wilkes-Barre. The union also represents nurses employed at the Community Medical Center (CMC) in Scranton.

The previous contract expired on August 30th and the two sides agreed to work under the terms and conditions of the expired contract while they continued to negotiate for a new pact.

One of the main issues blocking the two sides from reaching a new contract is staffing levels.

According to Stanley Wielgolpolski, a Registered Nurse (RN) at the medical center, staffing levels at the facility has steadily dropped with no similar significant drop in the number of patients.

Mr. Wielgolpolski stated the number of nurses PASNAP currently represents indicates the steady drop in staff levels. His said thirty nurses have left since CHS purchased the medical center.

PASNAP is conducting a campaign requesting the public sign petitions to show support for the nurses. The union stated more than 10,000 signatures have been obtained including those of Democratic United States Senator Robert Casey, State Representative (Democrat-116th Legislative District) Todd Eachus, State Representative Eddie Day Pashinski (Democrat-121st Legislative District) and State Representative Phyllis Mundy (Democrat-120th Legislative District).

On January 10th, PASNAP delivered to Hospital Administrators the petitions that requested that CHS put "Patients Before Profits" and settle the contract. Stanley Wiegłowski, an Emergency Room Nurse at Wilkes-Barre General and a delegate to the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council labor federation, stated the petition should show CHC officials that the public doesn't like them coming into our community with the sole purpose of making a profit.

"You need to respect our standards of care, you need to respect the caregivers who provide that care and you need to respect the patients who depend on our community hospital for their care," said Mr. Wiegłowski.

Negotiations between the two parties began more than 10 months ago in an attempt to obtain a successor contract agreement.