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**St. Chris Nurses Picket to Call Attention to Staffing Concerns**

*The nurses at St. Christopher’s want to provide the children of Philadelphia with the best care possible. Yet hospital execs are dragging their feet on putting basic patient protections and fairness for nurses in writing in the nurses’ contract even as they are cutting staffing levels, putting children at risk.*

**Philadelphia, PA:** On December 15, 2019, St. Christopher’s was purchased by Reading-based Tower Health and Drexel University. On that day, St. Chris nurses were informed that their PTO banks had been zeroed out, that management would no longer recognize their contract, and that bargaining had to begin all over again. Recently, management has started cutting the staffing levels that were agreed to in 2018, impairing the nurses’ ability to provide proper care to their young patients. Since returning to the bargaining table after disruptions to the schedule by the pandemic, negotiations have stalled.

Today, St. Chris nurses held an informational picket (an event that helps to raise community awareness; nurses attending an informational picket are either off from work that day or are on a break) to show management that they will stand together to do whatever it takes to protect the children of Philadelphia.

“When Tower and Drexel bought St. Chris, they felt it wasn’t necessary to have staffing enforcement language,” said Maria Plano, co-vice president of St. Christopher’s Nurses United. “The reason why we know we need it is that they haven’t been staffing us adequately. We just don’t see why a corporate, desk-sitting executive should make the decision as to what patients and nurses need on the floor.”

Studies show that when nurses have too many patients, care suffers.

“Gun violence has been increasing in the city of Philadelphia,” said St. Chris Emergency Department nurse Becky Murphy. “Now more than ever, this level-one trauma center needs to be fully staffed at all times. Our young patients depend on it.”

“Let’s really set the record straight here: We’re viewed as heroes by the public, yet all Tower CEO Clint Matthews does is dismiss us and treat us with disrespect,” said Deborah Young, vice president of St. Christopher’s Nurses United/Outpatient Division. We’re picketing because we’re being forced to fight for what’s best for us and for our patients, including contractual safe staffing, pro-rated holiday time for all nurses, access to affordable Tier 1 health benefits, a fair wage scale and, most important, *respect.”*

“We’ve already negotiated two contracts,” added Sue Swift, president of St. Christopher’s Nurses United. “We know the power of solidarity and one voice. We know that the union has advanced our ability to give good care. We’re ready for a fight with Tower and Drexel. We’re willing to escalate to protect our ability to provide the best care possible to the children of Philadelphia.”

St. Chris nurses want their young patients to receive the care they need at the bedside. To protect the children of Philadelphia and retain talented nurses, they want management to guarantee a minimum level of nursing care for each young patient.

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) represents 8,500 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth. Approximately 500 of those nurses work at St. Christopher’s.