

Negotiations

UPDATE

Catholic Health Hospitals File Unfair Labor Practice Charges Against CWA

Kenmore Mercy Hospital, Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, and Sisters of Charity Hospital/St. Joseph Campus filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) against the Communications Workers of America (CWA) today for engaging in bad-faith and surface bargaining.

Our hospitals have been bargaining in good faith with the CWA since negotiations began in February 2021. While a measure of progress has been made for the six contracts covering approximately 2,500 associates, negotiations stalled in late July. In June and July, the hospitals presented the union with initial economic proposals, which included wage package proposals for all CWA-represented associates. With only four weeks remaining before the contracts expire, the union has yet to respond with any substantive counteroffers on wages or benefits.

For the last several weeks, the union has appeared more focused on making noise in the streets than in negotiating new contracts for its members. We remain committed to working with the union to settle these negotiations just as we recently did with SEIU 1199 at our St. Joseph Campus, McAuley Residence and St. Catherine Labouré Health Care Center. The union needs to return its attention to our talks instead of organizing activities that do nothing to contribute to negotiations, but are intended to draw attention to the union and its leadership.

We're also hearing from nurses at Mercy Hospital about intimidation by CWA leaders to support the union's actions against our hospitals. Some nurses have said they are afraid to come to work because of bullying by the union. We are committed to providing a safe workplace for our associates and will not tolerate this behavior in our hospitals.

Catholic Health, like other health systems locally and across the country, has experienced significant financial challenges over the past several years due to the dramatic shift from inpatient to lower-cost outpatient care. These challenges have been compounded by tens of millions of dollars in losses stemming from the COVID pandemic. For the first half of 2021, Catholic Health reported a deeper operating loss of \$56 million, or a -9.4% margin, compared to a loss of -6.0% in 2020.

The current labor contracts have been extended until September 30, 2021, and the hospitals remain committed to settling them in good faith. With four weeks until the contracts expire, CWA already is threatening to take Mercy Hospital associates on strike. The hospital has a comprehensive strike contingency plan and will be fully prepared to meet our patients' and the community's healthcare needs if the union calls a strike. The hospital will hire licensed, experienced, and vaccinated temporary replacement nurses and qualified healthcare workers to care for patients should the union decide to take our associates away from patients during a pandemic.

The filings made on behalf of each hospital state, "CWA has failed and refused to engage in good faith bargaining for refusing to substantively respond to the Employer's economic proposals. CWA has continued to make surface level proposals that are consistently and predictably unacceptable to the Employer, and which demonstrate the Union's intent to avoid reaching an agreement and frustrate the bargaining process."