

November 4, 2021**Immediate Release****Contact:** JoAnn Cavanaugh, Director Public Relations**Office:** (716) 706-2061 | **Cell:** (716) 228-4886 | **Email:** jcav@chsbuffalo.org

Catholic Health Hospitals, CWA Reach Tentative Agreement; Union Strike at Mercy Hospital to End Immediately

Since contract talks broke down early Sunday morning, Catholic Health hospitals have been working to identify a solution that would meet the parties' needs for a tentative agreement, end the strike, and enable Mercy Hospital associates to return to work and begin caring for patients again.

This evening, after a series of discussions Wednesday, tentative agreement was reached on six contracts covering approximately 2,500 associates at Kenmore Mercy Hospital, Mercy Hospital of Buffalo and Sisters of Charity, St. Joseph Campus. As part of the agreement, CWA will end its strike immediately and schedule a ratification vote in the coming days to return nearly 2,000 Mercy Hospital associates to work as quickly as possible.

"We listened to our associates and their primary concerns were market-competitive wages and increased staffing," said Mark Sullivan, President & CEO of Catholic Health. "These new contracts address both and more. We are ready to welcome our caregivers back to Mercy Hospital."

Yesterday, Catholic Health hospitals presented the union with a compromise solution to resolve the sticking point over staffing that has held up a deal from being reached since Sunday. The hospitals would reallocate staffing resources across the care-delivery team to achieve the staffing numbers CWA sought.

"We want to operate our hospitals with staffing models that will best serve patients. Our position of providing high-quality care in a safe environment has not changed," Sullivan added. "Our staffing model is the most progressive approach to address staffing shortages of any hospital in our region. Not only does it comply fully with the New York State Safe Staffing law set to go into effect in January 2022, but it goes far beyond, adding 250 new positions in the face of a nationwide staffing shortage."

Mercy Hospital has a comprehensive plan to restore services that were temporarily suspended during the strike and will be providing updates in the coming days. "As we prepare to welcome our Mercy Hospital associates back, one critically important point we cannot lose sight of in all of this, is how grateful we are to all our managers, associates, and physicians throughout Catholic Health for everything they have done during this challenging time to maintain the highest quality care and service across our system, and to our Board of Directors for their leadership and support," Sullivan said. "Now, as we come back together as one family, we have our own healing to do."

CWA Locals 1133 and 1168 will soon announce member meetings to discuss the details of the tentative agreements, answer questions, and provide an opportunity for members to vote to ratify the new contracts. The hospitals are encouraging associates to attend the meetings and participate in the vote.

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