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Contact: Megan Othersen Gorman / mgorman@pasnap.com / (267) 398-3424

2,250 Temple University Hospital Nurses, Technical Specialists and Professionals Reach Three-Year Contract Deals That Further Respect Caregivers and Protect Patients and Caregivers Alike

Philadelphia, PA – Six weeks after their previous contracts had expired, 2,250 Temple University Hospital (TUH) nurses and allied health professionals have won new three-year contract deals that represent major steps forward in protecting and retaining seasoned caregivers in North Philadelphia and in providing safe and exceptional patient care to the TUH community.

“Nearly three years into the worst pandemic of our lifetimes, the system that’s supposed to support healthcare professionals, and therefore patients, is in crisis,” says PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N., a longtime Temple University Hospital nurse. “Hospital staff numbers have dwindled nationwide due to burnout and short-sighted, bottom-line decisions. This contract, with its emphasis on measures to improve retention, acknowledges the contributions of frontline caregivers and by prioritizing their well-being, also prioritizes patient care. We are thrilled.”

At the core of the caregivers’ negotiations, which spanned more than three months, were critical quality of care issues like safe staffing, recruitment and retention of caregivers, workplace violence prevention, and resources and protections for caregivers.

“This fight – and at times it was a fight – was always about our community: our TUH caregiver community and our patient community,” says ICU nurse Mary Adamson, RN, president of the Temple University Hospital Nurses Association (TUHNA). “This contract, with its new staffing language and the seat at the table it provides us in creating policies to report and prevent workplace violence, is game changing. It will help us retain seasoned nurses and better care for our patients. It’s a transformational win.”

“Temple caregivers are the hospital’s greatest asset,” says Carlos Aviles, a certified pharmacy technician and president of Temple Allied Professionals. “In this contract, the work we do – the work we risked our lives to do over the last two and a half years – is further respected, further valued. And that means we can stop bleeding experienced staff and keep our caregivers right here in North Philadelphia at Temple University Hospital, one of the only nonprofit hospitals left in the city.”

Today, TUH nurses overwhelmingly ratified by 88% a new contract that includes, for the first time, enforceable staffing guidelines – the equivalent of nurse-to-patient ratios – as well as other gains that will greatly enhance patient care. The new contract:

- Includes new staffing guidelines, to be posted transparently on all units, that provide safe and improved nurse-to-patient ratios, ensuring excellence in patient care and greater retention of seasoned nurses.
- Includes new safety and security measures, including stronger language on protections from workplace violence, including thefts and vandalism on hospital property; a commitment to install weapons detectors and station security at every entrance 24/7; and a newly created system for follow-up and debrief on incidents of workplace violence.

- Wages that make Temple nurses the highest paid statewide and give them the highest pay scales in any union contract in Pennsylvania, ensuring that Temple can attract new nurses and retain their experienced staff.

On Friday, an overwhelming majority – 89% – of the technical specialists and professionals voted to ratify a new contract that includes historic gains in wages and compensation as well as significant improvements on critical issues – including workplace violence prevention and reducing mandatory overtime – that should go a long way in improving retention of seasoned employees. The new contract:

- Reduces mandatory overtime, which leads to burnout, fatigue and, ultimately problems with retention.
- Significantly increases wages and other compensation
- Requires Temple to provide a safe work environment, protecting staff from workplace violence

“As a med/surg nurse working routinely in severely understaffed conditions, I’ve had to make too many impossible decisions,” says TUH 7 East nurses Janet Eaton, R.N. “I’ve had to decide between cleaning up a patient who had soiled himself and caring for an ER patient who had just come to the floor with a hemoglobin of 5, simply because we didn’t have enough nurses to provide both patients with immediate care. This new contract with its staffing grids means I will no longer have to ration nursing care and our patients will get what they need when they need it. That’s everything.”

“After working through a pandemic that greatly stressed all frontline caregivers, we worked very hard to get a contract we could be proud of – a contract that honors both our work and our patient community,” says TUHNA Board Member at Large and 8 Boyer nurse Phyllis Brown, R.N. “We fought especially hard and won nurse-to-patient ratios because we know it’s better for our patients.

“When it comes to the health and welfare of our colleagues and our patients,” says lead medical technologist Selena Hodge, Political and Community Engagement Chair for Temple Allied Professionals, “we were not going to compromise.”

The Temple University Hospital Nurses Association and Temple Allied Professionals are affiliates of PASNAP, the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents more than 9,000 frontline nurses and healthcare professionals across Pennsylvania.