

Cindy Russo, President
Baystate Franklin Medical Center
164 High St, Greenfield, MA 01301

Dear Cindy,

Recently you have written letters to the press, community and BFMC staff about our negotiations. We have actually been *at* bargaining, as have been about half of all our RN co-workers who have witnessed sessions for themselves. Respectfully, we are writing to say that, if you believe the descriptions of these negotiations that have been published above your signature, then what you are being told about them by your negotiators has been inaccurate.

- 1) It is uninformed and insulting to publish, as you have, “It appears that a larger MNA agenda is at play, one that mirrors their tactics elsewhere...” Here's the reality: *We are* the MNA at BFMC, and all our proposals come from the nurses at *this* hospital. The truth is that well over 90% of MNA contracts are settled without picketing, 99% without strikes, the majority are settled at the bargaining table without public mention of discord, and it is even more rare for MNA members to have to file federal charges of overall bad faith bargaining.

In Western Mass., our contracts at Mercy Medical Center in Springfield and Providence Hospital in Holyoke were settled before their expirations in *three sessions*. MNA members settled their contract with Cooley Dickinson in January on time without discord. The same was true with our last round of bargaining with the VNA & Hospice of Cooley Dickinson. MNA nurses at Smith College settled their contract with no public fanfare. In February, our members' contract with Vibra Hospital in Springfield was settled in *two* sessions. In Central Mass., in the past year our members at the gigantic UMass Med Center Memorial Campus settled their contract ahead of expiration in expedited bargaining, and members at their sister University Campus settled a few months later, with neither party expressing negativity in public. In April we settled our Clinton Hospital contract amicably. In 2016 we settled our contracts with the huge Tenet St. Vincent's Medical Center and with Tenet Metro West in *two session*.

Our members' negotiations in 2013 with Noble Hospital actually fit the MNA “pattern,” having been settled without rancor. This round, though, there have been scores of sessions with limited progress and public demonstrations. What changed? Nurses there have seen the more adversarial and less organized negotiations from their hospital's new owner, Baystate.

- 2) It is just wrong to criticize RNs for fighting for best practices in patient care and not just focusing on personal economic gain. In a better world, we would hope that Baystate executives would feel the same urgency as we in moving toward best practices. Patients today are much sicker on average than they were in the past, as treatment more often happens in an outpatient setting, resulting in the hospitalized patient population being far more acutely ill than ever. We are working exhausted.
- 3) You sent a letter to our neighbors falsely stating our average annual base pay based on a “40 hour work week.” Did you decide that it didn't matter how infuriating it would be for your own staff to read this, when we all know that approximately *two* staff nurses work 40 hours? As you know, the majority of us are scheduled to work between 24 and 32 hours, a number work only 16 hours, and one out of six work less than the 24 to 32 norm, as per diems without schedules and without benefits.

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4) There is something that we did at the beginning of these negotiations which is *not* standard for the MNA: We made overtures, saying that there is no reason that we shouldn't be able to work together with Baystate on broad strategic goals, and we asked for an exchange of ideas on joint legislative and community goals. In the two prior years we also made an effort to change the relationship for the better by, among other things, working with management on the capital fundraising campaign to build the new surgery center. It would not be true to say our overtures went unanswered. They've been answered with hostility:

- A year ago management eliminated our “Gold” health Plan.
- In January, while in bargaining, management eliminated our “Silver” health plan.
- In January, management raised our premiums for the “Bronze” plan by about 26%.
- Management has said that it will not entertain any health care proposals except to maintain the substandard plans that management has forced on us. We work at a *hospital*, and we can't provide a decent health plan for our families.
- Management ordered all RNs who had worked every 3rd weekend to work every other.
- Management has refused to bargain over the basic issues of RN workload and safe patient limits. We can't get rest! We come in for 8 hour shifts, and often can't leave until we've worked 12 or 13 or more, because there are no longer staff to take over for us.
- We can't count on days off, because we're constantly called to come in. This is not the best practice for patient care, and it's been hurting our personal lives.
- Management even has refused our proposal that it will hire adequate staff so that it can comply with the contract and the law.
- We are working exhausted, and when we say we feel that this is becoming unsafe, and that we no longer have time for ourselves our families, it is cold hearted for management to describe our reality as “An Agenda.”

We need to solve these problems together to make this hospital the best that it can be for the community, and to make it a decent place to work for the staff who are currently struggling.

Sincerely,

Jillian Sicard
Krisen Terapane
Dorota Stern
Charlotte Gordon
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Joanne Steles
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