



PRESS RELEASE

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Nurses Union Ratifies Contract with Saint Michael's Medical Center in Newark
Hospital becomes first in the state with contractual staffing ratios without cancellation

NEWARK – Today, JNESO District Council 1 announced that its members at Saint Michael's Medical Center have ratified a contract with the Hospital, and that the contract is the first in New Jersey to include staffing ratios without down-staffing language. This is a positive step in the union's statewide battle for safe staffing at New Jersey's hospitals.

"We're very pleased to announce that not only have we come to an agreement with Saint Michael's, but we have ensured that patient safety is at the very core of that agreement," said Virginia Treacy lead negotiator for the union. "We've made two very important accomplishments – we've guaranteed that Saint Michael's Medical/Surgical unit will at the very minimum have one nurse for every five patients on the unit, and we've guaranteed that management cannot cancel any nurse who is scheduled for work. Cancellations are not only dangerous to the patient, but to other nurses who work on the unit."

The union has been actively engaged in pushing for safe nurse-to-patient staffing ratios throughout the state, as nurses on some medical/surgical units have experienced a 9 to 1 ratio – nine patients for every nurse – a proportion that is deemed unsafe for patients by research and by medical professionals alike.

"Mandating a reasonable ratio in our medical/surgical unit will help us to better protect patient safety and ensure that our nurses have the support and resources they need to provide the kind of care that our community deserves," said Local President Esther Bediones. "At the same time, ensuring that nurses cannot be cancelled the day of their shift – a practice that has become quite common in healthcare facilities throughout the state – will allow our members to plan their lives with the predictability we deserve."

Cancelling healthcare workers with little notice has become a common tactic for management, sometimes because patient census is low and sometimes because it is deemed as a way to positively impact the facility's bottom line.

"Last minute cancellations compromise patient safety," said Douglas Placa, Executive Director for JNESO. "Preventing these cancellations and ensuring that our units are properly staffed will have a measurable impact on patient outcomes and on the community at large."

JNESO District Council 1 is a healthcare union representing more than 5,000 workers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including more than 500 members at Saint Michael's Medical Center.

To learn more, visit www.JNESO.org.