



# Berkshire Health Systems, Inc.

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Dear Berkshire Medical Center Community,

As many of you know, we have been in contract negotiations with the Service Employees International Union and the Massachusetts Nurses Association in an effort to secure successor labor agreements for the next three years. The purpose of these negotiations is to arrive at fair contracts between our employees and the medical center. We're writing to you today in order to bring you up-to-date on the status of these negotiations.

We wish to congratulate the SEIU and Berkshire Medical Center bargaining teams for their good work, and express our appreciation to the members of their bargaining units for their ratification of new agreements.

Despite the significant efforts of our negotiation team, we are disappointed that we are unable to report meaningful progress in our negotiations with the MNA, the union representing our registered nurses at BMC. Rather than focusing on worthwhile face-to-face negotiations, the MNA has been going through the motions of negotiation, according to reports from the bargaining committee, seemingly distracted from the kind of engagement we see when both parties are motivated by an interest in successfully completing them.

We have learned that the MNA, and some members within the MNA bargaining unit, have reached out to elected officials and members of our community, telling them that we are risking the safety of our patients by not agreeing to the MNA's unreasonable staffing demands made during our sessions. We are perplexed by these claims, not only because BMC has been ranked as the top performer in Patient Safety Indicators in the nation, according to data collected by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, but also because when we offered a formal mechanism to more fully engage our registered nurses in our staffing process, the MNA rejected it.

On that note, we wanted to take a moment to go over those concerns, and describe the process we use to build our staffing plans at BMC. Most importantly, we want to make it clear that patient safety is our number-one priority, and we continue to achieve tremendous outcomes for our patients and their families.

In order to provide the highest level of care to our patients, we follow the protocols recommended by the American Nurses Association, the premiere organization that represents the 3.6 million nurses throughout the United States. The ANA advocates a safe and ethical work environment of the highest standards, and acts as an advocate for both patient safety and the nurses they represent. At BMC, we use the procedures set forth by the ANA to create our

staffing plans by looking at a number of elements to ensure each department is fully staffed and able to function as a unit, supported by a multi-disciplinary team of caregivers. These teams consist of a variety of support staff and direct care resources, including LPNs, respiratory therapists, physicians, IV therapists, wound care nurses, nurse educators, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, social workers, crisis nurses, interns, monitor technicians, nursing directors, and a multitude of other staff members who are available to support our patients throughout their recovery. We also look at our patient population, the daily census, the skill level of our staff, and the available resources within the department, by taking into account each department's physical layout, and making appropriate changes in order to maintain efficiency, with carefully placed equipment, nursing stations, and medication preparation rooms. The technology we've implemented is a tremendous resource that supports patient safety by maintaining health records electronically and automating the pharmaceutical administration procedure.

Patient Safety Indicators measure potentially preventable harmful outcomes for patients. Our detailed Staffing Plan, which has been briefly summarized above, and follows recommendations from the American Nurses Association and the Department of Public Health, has been a key factor in this achievement.

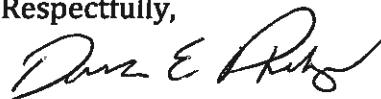
In addition to being #1 in the nation when it comes to Patient Safety Indicators, BMC has been named one of America's Top Quality Hospitals in 2017 by CareChex, routinely received Straight A's from Leapfrog's Hospital Safety Score, was awarded the Gold Seal of Approval from The Joint Commission, and has been presented with multiple Excellence Awards from Healthgrades.

We will continue to follow the guidelines set forth by the ANA and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, in accordance with all patient safety regulations, regardless of the outcome of our negotiation with the MNA.

In summary, we want to make it clear that we value the contribution of our registered nurses, and are proud of the accomplishments of our clinical and support teams. Our goal is to achieve a fair and sustainable contract with the MNA, and we will keep you informed as negotiations continue.

Meanwhile, you can be certain our patients are safely cared for by highly skilled teams that always remember why we are here – to provide the utmost care to our patients.

Respectfully,



Dave P. Phelps  
President & CEO  
Berkshire Health Systems



Diane P. Kelly DNP, RN  
Chief Operating Officer  
Berkshire Medical Center