

To: Faculty, Staff, Students and Residents
From: Kenneth S. Polonsky, MD, Dean and EVP for Medical Affairs
Sharon O'Keefe, UCMC President
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2019
Subject: Nurses' Union Gives Second Strike Notice

We are sorry to share the news that National Nurses Organizing Committee/National Nurses United (NNOC/NNU) has given our hospital notice that it is directing the 2,200 nurses it represents to wage a second strike beginning Tuesday, November 26 – two days before Thanksgiving. Today's notice comes the day after the Union held a strike-authorization vote among its members.

We are extremely disappointed by the Union's decision to strike, as we did not want another walkout and have been working earnestly at the negotiating table to reach agreement. The last strike was just two months ago, and we had made progress at the bargaining table.

UCMC offered significant compromises on many key issues during bargaining sessions on November 7 and 11, and invited the Union to work with us. Today, the Union rejected all of the compromises that UCMC had offered on major issues, and gave us a proposal reinforcing its inflexible demands. The Union did not wait for UCMC's response, and served us with a pre-prepared written strike notice along with its demands.

Once again, rather than stay at the table and engage in the hard work of reaching the compromises that will produce a new contract, the Union is ordering nurses to walk out on their patients and their co-workers during a holiday.

This is not a strike against a nameless, faceless institution.

This is a strike against our patients and their families. This is a strike against our community — one of the most vulnerable in Chicago where residents face high rates of serious conditions and life-threatening diseases. This is a strike against neighborhoods that rely on us for life-saving emergency and trauma care.

This is a strike against our physicians, our respiratory therapists, our pharmacists, our nursing support assistants and other clinicians who will be here during the holiday — rather than spending time with their families over Thanksgiving — to care for the patients the Union is ordering our nurses to walk out on.

This is a strike against our security personnel, our environmental services workers, food services workers and all of our other support staff who also will be here during Thanksgiving to help care for our patients.

We came away with many lessons from the September strike, and will continue to strive to serve our patients and the community.

All of us have made plans for the Thanksgiving holiday, and we truly regret that many of us may not be able to spend time with family and friends as a result of the strike — especially those who rarely see loved ones or have a family member who is ill or elderly.

But our patients, their families and the community we serve need the lifesaving care we provide.

We have two bargaining sessions scheduled in advance of the strike and had been scheduled to meet on November 26 as well. We have two additional sessions scheduled after the strike on December 11 and 18. Our bargaining team will continue to push forward to try to reach agreement with the Union.

At the same time, we will begin providing you with regular updates in the coming days about our preparations for the NNOC/NNU strike.

We know the workforce disruption will again challenge our organization, but we showed the last time that we know how to come together to serve our patients. We urge you to stay focused on our mission to provide high-touch and high-quality care to everyone who comes to the University of Chicago Medical Center.