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Statement from UMass Memorial Medical Center Regarding MNA Strike Authorization Vote

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Over the last several months, UMass Memorial Medical Center has negotiated in good faith with the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) toward a fair contract resolution that is in the best interests of our patients, our nurses and UMass Memorial Medical Center. We believe strongly the outcome should also be consistent with the shared sacrifices that the Medical Center's non-union managers and staff and five other labor unions representing more than 6,700 employees have already agreed to.

While we are not surprised, we are very disappointed to learn that the UMass Memorial Medical Center nurses represented by the MNA have taken a strike authorization vote. This vote does not mean that the nurses are on strike, nor have they alerted us that they intend to strike.

As the MNA and its national partner, the National Nurses United, have repeatedly demonstrated, rather than working cooperatively to address the profound changes occurring in health care, their preferred approach to negotiations is to use the threat of a strike and allegations of unsafe staffing as tools to achieve their bargaining objectives despite the impact that such tactics have on patients and employees. In fact, the MNA has threatened Massachusetts hospitals with strikes eight times over the past two years because of alleged "unsafe staffing."

We are committed to maintaining appropriate staffing levels at the Medical Center to provide the high level of care our patients expect and deserve. We disagree with the MNA's mandatory staffing ratio proposal because studies have shown that mandated ratios do not improve the quality of care. This is why hospitals across the country have consistently rejected efforts to put mandatory staffing ratios into collective bargaining agreements.

Specifically, after listening carefully to our nurses, we have put forward comprehensive staffing proposals that address specific areas of focus without resorting to mandated staffing ratios. We have also already agreed to 16 of the MNA's proposals on other issues. All of these proposals can be viewed online at www.umassmemorialchange.org

We stand by the high quality and safe care that we provide patients at the Medical Center. At UMass Memorial, our patients always have been, and always will be, our highest priority.