



UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION

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October 25, 2021

Dear Western Mass Legislators,

I'm writing on behalf of UFCW Local 1459, representing over 5,000 public and private sector members across Western Massachusetts, to ask all Massachusetts public officials to take any and all steps necessary to support the 700 courageous registered nurses of St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester as they seek an equitable resolution to their historic strike, which now, at seven months, is the longest nurses strike in our state's history.

This is a righteous strike that began with only one goal -- to ensure safer working conditions to better protect their community, which is being waged against Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare, a heartless and ruthless for-profit corporation that has spent well over \$100 million to force and prolong this strike at a time when COVID-19 is surging and overwhelming facilities in Worcester and throughout Massachusetts.

In recognition of this crisis, the nurses have made it clear several weeks ago that they were ready to accept an agreement proposed by the hospital to end the strike so they can get back into the hospital and care for the patients of Worcester. Yet Tenet has scuttled that effort by demanding a settlement that would deny the striking nurses an equitable "return to work" provision, denying them the ability to return to work at their previous position. Tenet has also been engaged in a number of unfair labor practices, and has been actively recruiting and hiring staff to permanently replace these nurses, specifically targeting the most experienced nurses as well as those who are leaders within the nurses' union.

While actively recruiting and hiring staff to permanently replace these nurses, Tenet specifically targeted the most experienced nurses as well as those who are leaders within the nurses' union – a destructive tactic that no union, nor anyone who values the rights of working people would or should accept under any circumstances.

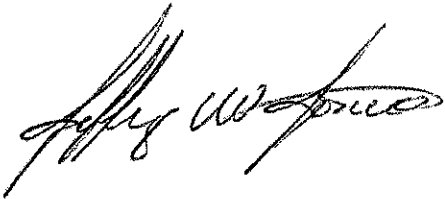
The nurses who Tenet is refusing to guarantee a return to their positions are the same nurses who have provided expert care to their community during the worst public health crisis in our nation's history. They did so for many months under unsafe staffing conditions, with inadequate PPE and no vaccines, which exposed hundreds of nurses to COVID infection, placing all the nurses' own lives and their families' lives in jeopardy every day.

The ability to end a lawful strike without removing so-called permanent replacement, as Tenet is demanding, is a major issue for our union and the entire labor movement and is one that we cannot allow, particularly in an instance where the very safety of the community is at stake. This is particularly true here in Massachusetts, which prides itself as a labor friendly state that supports and values the rights of all union members and working people. The right to strike without fear of replacement is also one of the key components of the Pro Act, vitally important federal legislation supported by all unions. This provision is also currently included as an important component of the Reconciliation Bill. Moreover, since Tenet has committed multiple serious unfair labor practices during the strike, we believe that the strike has been converted to an unfair labor practice strike, a consequence of which all replacements should themselves be replaced by returning nurses as a matter of law.

We have been pleased to see strong opposition to Tenet's actions from nearly every member of our Congressional delegation, as well as Worcester's Mayor, City Council and the Worcester legislative delegation. The nurses' strike and this issue is also being followed by labor, health care and social justice organizations across the country and across the world, as their struggle is rightfully viewed as more than a local fight for safer patient care, but as pivotal fight to define and protect the rights of all workers to stand up against corporate greed and blatantly retaliatory labor practices.

So given the nobility of the nurses' struggle and its impact on the safety the Greater Worcester community, as well as the broader implications and dangerous precedent Tenet's position would establish for all working people in Massachusetts, we call upon our elected officials and all entities involved in the provision of health care in Massachusetts to do whatever you can to compel Tenet to settle this strike with the dignity and respect these nurses deserve. We all came together in 2019 around the Stop & Shop strike. We must do the same here. We also want to make clear, as stated by Worcester Mayor Joe Petty that "we will not allow Worcester or our state to be a testing ground for the imposition of unprecedented labor practices that harm unions and all workers. And when it comes to our nurses, who have given so much to us for so many years, we want Tenet to know that we in Massachusetts believe that the St. Vincent nurses are irreplaceable."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey W. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Jeffrey W. Jones
President UFCW Local 1459, AFL-CIO