

Media Advisory For: Friday, July 26, 2019

Contacts: Dave Bates, 347-865-8038, davebcomms@gmail.com
Amy Clark, SEIU 1199NW, 425-306-2061, amyc@seiu1199nw.org
Ruth Schubert, WSNA, 206-713-7884, rschubert@wsna.org

Hundreds of Outraged Nurses & Healthcare Workers to Hold “Rally for Patients Before Profits” at Providence Corporate Headquarters

Caregivers will travel from across WA to bring their message directly to multi-millionaire execs, raising alarms about patient safety concerns, severe understaffing, unaffordable healthcare, cuts to sick time, layoffs, unfair wages and racial injustice at Providence facilities

What: “Rally for Patients Before Profits” with nurses, caregivers, elected officials, faith leaders and community members

When: Friday, July 26 at 12:30 PM

Where: Providence Corporate Headquarters
1801 Lind Ave. SW, Renton, WA

Renton, WA- On Friday, July 26, hundreds of outraged nurses and healthcare workers will travel from across Washington to hold a “Rally for Patients Before Profits” at the corporate headquarters of Providence St. Joseph Health, the state’s largest health system. The caregivers decided to bring their message directly to multi-millionaire executives because managers in their local Providence facilities have refused to address urgent problems including serious patient safety concerns, severe understaffing, unaffordable healthcare, cuts to sick time, layoffs, unfair wages and racial injustice on the job.

“Providence is raking in huge profits while refusing to commit needed resources for safe staffing and patient care, and trying to gut the sick time benefits that dedicated staff have earned over years of service to our hospitals,” said Stevie Lynne Krone, a registered nurse at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane. Stevie is a member of the Washington State Nurses Association which represents 1,900 nurses at Sacred Heart, and 915 nurses at Providence Kadlec Regional Medical Center in the Tri-Cities, all of whom are fighting for fair contracts. “Nurses and caregivers need sick time because we’re exposed to all sorts of hazards on the job, and communicable diseases which we can bring back to our children and vulnerable family members. We have to be healthy to provide quality healthcare to our patients.”

Tensions have further boiled over as nurses and caregivers have learned that Providence had over \$24 billion in operating revenue and \$11 billion in cash reserves last year, and the top 15 executives had over \$41 million in compensation in 2017. Providence has also launched two for-profit venture capital funds totaling \$300 million. Caregivers say that, as Providence has grown into a seven-state corporate giant, it has forsaken the founding core values of the Sisters of Providence and instead now prioritizes excessive executive pay, hollow branding campaigns, for-profit ventures and market expansion ahead of quality patient care.

“The Providence system is thriving and executives are getting unbelievably wealthy, so they need to invest in quality patient care and good jobs,” said Tara McIntosh, a medical records specialist at Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett. Tara is a member of OPEIU Local 8 which represent over 1,000 workers at the facility who have been in contract negotiations for the past 10 months. “It’s unacceptable for Providence to propose eliminating our sick leave bank, while those at the top continue to pad their already over-filled pockets. Shouldn’t the largest health system in Washington offer affordable healthcare and fair sick time to staff?”

The frontline staff who will be rallying represent over 20,000 workers from throughout the Providence system in almost every job title, including registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, chaplains, radiology techs, respiratory therapists, hospice workers, social workers, clerks, nutrition workers, environmental services, pharmacists, lab workers and more. The shared problems they are experiencing have become so extreme that they have prompted the workers’ four different unions – OPEIU Local 8, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, UFCW 21 and the Washington State Nurses Association – to create the “Providence United Coalition” to support each other and jointly hold executives accountable for solutions. The healthcare workers will also be joined at the rally by dozens of other union members from industries throughout Washington who will be attending the Washington State Labor Council Convention that day. Many of these union members and their families utilize Providence healthcare services.

“Providences’ sick leave proposal takes away our ability to safely care for our patients,” said Jose Hernandez, who has been an emergency room assistant at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center for a decade. Jose is a member of UFCW 21 which has 6,000 members at Providence facilities across the state, many of whom are participating in nine current contract negotiations. “Management wants to pay us only 65% of our base pay if we’re sick and take away the hours of sick leave we have already accrued, which is a cut of thousands of dollars for most of us. We shouldn’t be forced to come to work sick because we need to pay for rent or groceries, that’s not safe for our patients or ourselves.”

Caregivers say that as a Catholic “not-for-profit” and the largest health system in the state, Providence has a moral responsibility to be a leader in providing the highest quality patient care and good jobs. Instead, a small group of executives at the top are getting extremely rich while dragging down standards and pushing the state’s healthcare industry in the wrong direction.

In one egregious example, Providence recently launched an expensive branding campaign which proclaims that “Health is a human right.” But 3,732 Providence employees and dependents had to rely on the state’s Medicaid program Apple Health last year, the largest number of any health system in the state by far. It is a sad irony that those who have dedicated their lives to providing healthcare cannot afford healthcare for themselves and their children due to Providence’s unaffordable premiums, high deductibles, co-pays and other costs.

“I’m an after-hours registered nurse in home hospice, so I get the crisis calls in the middle of the night,” said Sarah Taylor, who works at Providence Hospice and Home Care of Snohomish County. Sarah is a member of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, which represents 225 workers at Providence Hospice and Homecare and over 8,000 staff at other Providence facilities. SEIU 1199NW members at Providence-Swedish Medical Center are also currently fighting for a fair contract. “This is incredibly demanding work, but executives are not recognizing or valuing our commitment. Providence needs to listen to our voice so we can provide dignified lives for our families and quality care to our communities.”

The Providence United Coalition represents 20,000 nurses and caregivers throughout Washington State in OPEIU Local 8, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, UFCW 21 and the Washington State Nurses Association. Our mission is to hold Providence St. Joseph Health accountable for quality patient care and good jobs for our communities

###