

# We Stand up for Our Patients Every Day – We Will Continue to Stand up for Ourselves and Our Futures

## Our message is clear: Hands off our retirement!

We need assurance that we will have financial security in the future, especially when we eventually retire. While we know that the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for hospitals, management’s unilateral decision to suspend our retirement contributions is outside of the measures other hospitals have taken. Management says this move will avoid layoffs, but they have not made an attempt to seek our input to come up with solutions that address the hospital’s financial situation. **With the pandemic stretching on, the hospital needs to do everything it can to recruit and retain staff so we can give our community the care it needs, but cutting benefits does the opposite.**

### Understanding Valley’s financial situation

We know that VMC, over the past months, has received financial support from our community and money from the government in response to the pandemic. Even with that funding, the hospital, like almost every area hospital, did lose money in April and May. Across the hospital, however, many of us have experienced that patient volumes and surgeries are increasing again after elective services resumed over the past month. We believe that the hospital could be and should be making different choices so that our benefits and jobs stay intact.

That’s why we’ve been meeting with management, including the CFO, to both understand what is happening with the hospital financially and let management know the dire impacts this decision is having on all of us. We have made it clear that we will continue to push back on the cuts. From those conversations and information we’ve requested, we know that:

- VMC received almost \$39 million in COVID-related funds from the government
- VMC saves \$6 million by suspending retirement contributions for everyone through December
- The hospital has almost three months in cash on hand—meaning it could pay its operating expenses for almost three months without receiving any money from any patients or insurance
- CMS awarded VMC a loan of approximately \$64 million that the hospital is not currently using



“The hospital is worried about saving money but a lot of us showed up to work terrified for our lives, but did it to keep the hospital functioning. When patients walk through the doors, they aren’t here to see a CEO or CFO or CNO. They’re here to see us—nurses, respiratory therapists, X-Ray techs, and the rest of us on the frontline.

As much as management’s jobs are important to running the hospital, it’s still those of us cleaning rooms and drawing blood and taking vitals who make the hospital function. So why would you take away from the very people who you need to keep the hospital open?” **Ariane Laird, RN, Emergency Department**

### Taking action together

The hospital administration needs to do right by all of us and our families so that our community can continue to get care. We’re standing together and taking action to let management know we will not accept these cuts. We’ve signed on to and delivered our banner from our public rally, spoken to community members and media, filed grievances, and continue to explore additional legal pathways and take action together.

In the next days, we will continue to take action as a group across the hospital and clinics. Check in with your delegate or organizer to join the next action.



“During this pandemic we, the employees at Valley, have stepped up to the plate and done the jobs that only we could do to care for our community, and the thanks we get from management is to have our retirement benefits

taken away. I consider it a slap in the face after everything we’ve been through and are still going through that management plans to move ahead with this. We can’t and we won’t stand idly by and let them disregard our contract and our work—we’re going to continue to take action together.” **Ayelech Abera, Housekeeper, Environmental Services**



“Administration told us they’ve had to spend extra money for PPE. So now they want to save money on us. But they need us, healthcare workers, to be protected and to show up to work the next day and the next, again

and again to take care of patients. They need to recognize that by leaving our retirement benefits alone.” **Marina Savitkaia, Respiratory Therapist, RT**

### Our Wages During the Pandemic: 3% Across-the-Board Increase This Pay Period

For those of us in the RN, Service, and LPN bargaining units, we will begin to see our negotiated 3% wage increase on our paychecks. All of us took action and worked together to make sure our contract includes wage increases that help keep us in line with the increases in the cost of living. When we unite, we can win standards that align with our vision and value our work.