Dear Hospital Presidents,

We write to you today out of critical concern for the safety and well-being of New York City area hospital patients and local communities.

It has come to our attention that more than 10,000 New York City-area nurses are currently working with expired labor contracts at your hospitals. We understand that negotiations are not proceeding well, as you have refused to discuss critical issues related to staffing and working conditions raised by your registered nurses. Registered nurses working in your hospitals have expressed to us that they are losing patience with your refusal to seriously address their concerns, most importantly their demands for improved minimum staffing standards. The lack of progress in bargaining has led recently to a day of city-wide picketing, which was widely reported in the press. We have further noted that your nurses’ frustration has now reached the point that the nurses are making preparations to strike.

This situation is very alarming to us as fellow registered nurses and to our communities.

To make matters worse, we understand that hospitals across New York City are in the process of contracting with for-profit temporary nursing corporations to take the place of our existing local nursing workforce.

These temporary agencies that you are seeking to engage, including most prominently U.S. Nursing Corporation and Health Source Global Staffing, Inc., specialize in breaking strikes and providing untrained registered nurses to staff hospitals on strike.

In our hospitals, newly hired nurses must be trained by existing RNs on the unit for at least a month and, in some specialties, up to three months before they are deemed able to care for their own patient assignment. By allowing these temporary nurses to care for patients without adequate training and with no experienced staff to act as resources on the units, you are putting patients at risk of serious medical errors. This decision begs the questions: will a group of untrained,

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temporary workers know where life-saving equipment is stored during an emergency? Will they know how to call for backup in the chaos of a code? Will they be able to handle the unsafe numbers of patients for which they will be forced to accept? Wait times for emergency room treatment will grow worse, the quality of care in in-patient acute care units will suffer, costs of treatment and complications will soar, and ultimately, patients’ lives will be put at unnecessary risk. More patients will die and more patients will suffer needless adverse health effects.²

Furthermore, your unwillingness to bargain in good faith and settle a contract places a tremendous burden on other New York City hospitals, such as ours, when patients seek out other facilities not mired in this strike. Our community deserves better. The nurses who live in our communities, who have worked tirelessly for years in providing vital health services should be the ones caring for our communities. It is quite literally the health of New York City that you jeopardize when you place our health care in the hands of untrained, temporary workers from these staffing agencies.

We call on you, as Chief Executive Officers and leadership of our fellow local hospital systems to avoid this reckless and needless shutdown of our fellow hospitals and work constructively with our fellow nurses to reach fair agreements. The time has come to engage in serious negotiations to avert an unnecessary catastrophe for our communities and the patients that rely on our hospitals.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Flynn President of NYPNU Rebecka Hawkins Beatty Executive Director
on behalf of the 1300 members of New York Professional Nurses Union

² According a National Bureau of Economic Research study, the deterioration in patient care when scabs replace the regular nurse workforce lead to a 19.4% increase in patient mortality and a 6.5% increase in 30-day readmissions. See: Do Strikes Kill? Evidence from New York State, J. Gruber and S. Kleiner (2010) at https://www.nber.org/papers/w15855.pdf. Interestingly, similar data in other industries supports the finding that employment of scab labor affects the quality of goods and services, including higher rates of defective automotive tires and tread separation (see: https://www.nber.org/papers/w9524.pdf), the quality and value of heavy construction machinery (see: https://www.nber.org/papers/w13136.pdf) and student achievement and test scores (see: https://www.nber.org/papers/w16846.pdf).